Also by
ROBERT PAYNE

—

LOVE AND PEACE
CHUNGKING DIARY
SINGAPORE RIVER
DAVID AND ANNA
THE CHINESE SOLDIER and other Stories

ROBERT PAYNE

*

JOURNEY TO RED CHINA



UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
19 MAR 1953

LONDON · WILLIAM HEINEMANN LTD · TORONTO

FIRST PUBLISHED 1947

THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN COMPLETE
CONFORMITY WITH THE AUTHORISED
ECONOMY STANDARDS

—

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN AT THE WINDMILL PRESS
KINGSWOOD, SURREY

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	JOURNEY TO YENAN	3
II	THE YELLOW VALLEY	7
III	A LETTER	10
IV	RED VIRTUE IN THE DATE GARDEN	11
V	TEMPLE AND PAGODA	23
VI	THE SOLDIER	27
VII	THE DANCE IN THE PEACH ORCHARD	27
VIII	COMMUNIST GENERAL	33
IX	MAO TSE-TUNG'S HEAD	42
X	THE GUERRILLA	49
XI	THE INVASIONS OF WESTERN SUMMER	58
XII	FACES	62
XIII	LANDSCAPE	64
XIV	YOG	66
XV	THE SCHOOL IN THE CAVES	70
XVI	YELLOW RIVER CANTATA	73
XVII	THE DEAD	76
XVIII	CHIEF-OF-STAFF	78
XIX	THE CAVE OF THE TEN THOUSAND BUDDHAS	81
XX	MAO TSE-TUNG	83
XXI	DOCTOR MA	93
XXII	THE PRISON	98
XXIII	THE BOY	105
XXIV	THE COMMUNIST DELEGATE	107

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXV	THE POET	111
XXVI	KALGAN	115
XXVII	THE PALACE OF PRINCE TEH	118
XXVIII	MORE ABOUT MAO TSE-TUNG	121
XXIX	THE CINEMA	126
XXX	A JAPANESE SHRINE	129
XXXI	STUDENTS	132
XXXII	KU YUAN AND THE WOODCUTS	135
XXXIII	AI CHING AND THE TRUMPETS	137
XXXIV	TING LING AND THE BLIND STORY-TELLERS	151
XXXV	THE COLONEL	158
XXXVI	THE OLD REVOLUTIONARIES, I	162
XXXVII	THE OLD REVOLUTIONARIES, II	173
XXXVIII	TUNNELS AND LAND-MINES	180
XXXIX	THE DESERT AND THE SOWN	189
XL	THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA	191
XLI	RETURN TO PEKIN	195

For General George Marshall

INTRODUCTION

ALL over north and central China there are places as mysterious as Shangri-La, Chin-Cha-Chi, Chin-Chi-Lu-Yu, Shen-Kan-Ning—there are many others—are the names of these places. The number of people living in these areas may be as great as 130,000,000. They are the liberated areas under the government of the Chinese Communists.

Chin-Cha-Chi comprises the liberated areas of Shansi, Chahar and Hopei. Shen-Kan-Ning stands for the liberated areas of Shensi, Kansu and Ninghsia. Chin-Chi-Lu-Yu stands for the liberated areas of Shansi, Hopei, Shantung and Honan. There are also Hua Chung or Central China, and Chung Yuan, or Central Plain. There are others in Manchuria and others in Shantung. Within these areas the agrarian revolution is being carried out by men who call themselves Communists, but whose agrarian practices seem to approach to nothing more radical than old-fashioned liberalism. On the borders of these areas fighting is nearly continuous.

This book is an account of a journey to two of these areas. My main interest was to see what could be done to prevent the civil war. I took no sides—for I had friends in both camps, and believed then, and still believe that there are enough good men on both sides to resolve all conflicts. I have attempted no statistical enquiry and no evaluation of the forces at work: it is simply an account of the people I met there, the landscape, the things people say and the hopes they have, their poetry and Universities and dances and songs. Most of all it is about the people—

the generals, the landlords, the students, the guerrillas, the professors, the merchants, the administrators—those hosts of people who have been fighting for eight years against the Japanese and now find themselves still fighting for their liberties.

I JOURNEY TO YENAN

You go down the long road which leads from Pekin to the Western Hills early in the morning. All the way down the road there are stiff, gold wheatfields in the sun, and here and there are marble memorials—stone lions, dragons, turtles. You tell yourself that this is one of the oldest places in the world. The walls of Pekin are crumbling and all over the imperial city grass is growing through the roof-beams and the thrones of the emperors are falling into powder, the brocades are torn and soon there will be nothing left except the ancient court-yards filled with ruins. It is true enough, but in this fresh morning air, with the blue haze on the hills, it doesn't seem important. The whole place is alive with birds and immense square fields and farmcarts and workmen—the air has never been brighter, the colours have never been fresher, and you wonder why you are leaving Pekin to go to an old, abandoned city in northern Shensi.

I knew almost nothing of Yenan before I went there except that it was regarded with grave suspicion by the outside world. It was a place (they said) full of obnoxious people who called themselves Communists and behaved like lunatics. Had they not overthrown the ancient gods? They even derided Confucius, and they were said to believe in free love; they murdered landlords at sight and they were fighting, for no reason at all except that they thirsted for power, an implacable civil war against the legal government of China. I had considerable sympathy for anyone who derided Confucius, and not too much sympathy for Chinese landlords. Free love was a subject about which I

knew nothing at all, but the civil war was something very real and I wanted desperately to know how it could be brought to an end. The Kuomintang newspapers accused the Communists of all the crimes under the sun, and I was beginning to suspect that there might be something to be said for the other side. And since nothing is easier than to get to Yenan—you simply step into an aeroplane—it seemed worth while to find out what they had to say. It was June, 1946. There was a truce between the two parties which would extend to the end of the month. After that the whole of China might be given over to civil war.

There were other reasons for going. I had lived so long in south China that I knew almost nothing about the north. It was easy enough to stay in Pekin and wander round the palaces and admire the gold roofs—there is a spaciousness and an air of grace which I have never known in any other city—but if you stay long enough in Pekin, you are drowned as certainly as if you had thrown yourself into a lotos-studded lake. Times passes slowly. You move in a haze of gold splendours. The marble bridges, the green moats, the curves of the roofs and the massiveness of the rotting walls have a peculiar attraction and if you stay more than three months in Pekin, you are in danger of never travelling farther. But Pekin is not north China any more than an oasis in the Sahara is the Sahara itself. Moreover, there is nothing in Pekin as old as the Tower of London, Rome is at least twice its age, and I was growing a little weary of its claim to represent all that was ancient and best in China. But northern Shensi is the cradle of the Chinese race, and it was there that the Chinese had come first to their maturity. Perhaps there you would find the mysterious and legendary China of your dreams—not the China of emperors and dancing girls and marble palaces, but the China of robust, civilised men with a settled

behaviour of living. Certainly, there was little enough of this in the south where the best starved and the worst achieved epics of corruption.

The macadamised road from Pekin goes straight to the West Field, where there were at least fifty aeroplanes on the ground. They were camouflaged with green and ochre paint to remind you that the war was hardly over, and they were attended by young Americans in shorts who looked amazingly tall and fair, so that you half wondered whether you had strayed from a court-yard in Pekin to another planet altogether. It was good to be there, and to see all this evidence of another maturity. Pekin and the airfield were poles apart. The houses in Pekin are designed according to an established ritual, which insists that man is a child of the earth and must follow earth's ways, he is rooted in the earth and must follow the laws of earth, building neither too high nor too low, and never priding himself on the conquest of the elements. The old traditions in China were dying. There was a new, more vigorous world coming, a world of skyscrapers and aeroplanes and social reforms. There will be more equality, and sooner than most people suspect there will be less corruption. Giant forces were at work, yet no one could see their end. All we could tell with certainty was that inevitably the Chinese would become as western as ourselves, as western as those aeroplanes whose humming in the clear sky as they circled over the air-strip was not unlike the humming of the flutes inserted in the wings of the pigeons in Pekin.

On the airfield you can see the future from a distance, but once you are inside the freight plane, you realise that the future is going to be as uncomfortable as the past. Though the aims are clearer, it will not all be pleasant —you realise that the future will be as menacing as

the small cabin with the bucket-seats all removed, so that you have to lie on the floor, and you can hardly see out of the windows because no one has troubled to clean them, and there are eighteen parachute harnesses swinging on a wire rope above your head and the baggage is slipping all over the plane. I managed to see a little through a small hole in the centre of the glass. This is not the fault of the airmen, who have other things to do than to wipe windows, but it is annoying when you want to see north China. There was a doctor, a general, a girl in a red print frock, four or five soldiers. The brown paper bags crackled, the pilot came plunging down the cabin in search of the lavatory and the parachute harnesses began swinging from side to side. Through the pin-hole you saw the gold-red roofs of the summer palace disappearing, and soon you were over blue-tented mountains, wrinkled like an elephant's skin, with deep green shadows and here and there a space where a peasant had carved out on the steep slopes a place to live and farm in. The mountains were poor pasture land. You felt the poverty of the place, and you were shocked by the white sores on the mountains where rivers had once flowed and would flow again in autumn, though no water fell down them now. It was a bleak, hard, desolate unavailing landscape after the rich yellow plain in which Pekin stands; yet it was brilliantly coloured, with every variation of blue and green. Then at last the blue tents gave place to the plains again, the earth changed colour, ochre and brown, and much sooner than you had expected you were among the yellow hump-backed mountains of Shensi. Here was loess, most fertile of earths when watered, but the land looked dry, the villages in the valley looked unbelievably small. I do not know why they make China yellow on the map, for China is all colours. From the air

it is lead-green over Chungking, and all the colours of the rainbow over Kumming. Here it was the colour of faded yellow tiles. But where did people live when there was no sign of houses?

The paper bags crackled again, and suddenly, after nearly four hours, the aeroplane was streaking low over a plain between yellow hills, driving straight for a tall pagoda. There followed inevitably that most delightful sensation which comes when one wing shoots straight into the sky, and all the yellow hills were above, and the blue sky lay beneath. Above you were houses, not many, perhaps five or six, a river, caves in the mountains, dusty roads, and you saw the long yellow valley with its loess walls. The pagoda streaked past again. The airfield was a green field, and the first thing you noticed when the cabin door was opened was the sweet smell of dust and grass.

II THE YELLOW VALLEY

I NEVER discovered where the sweet smell came from. There was mint in it, and parsley, and scented flowers, and clean mountain air. There was no sign of any flowers, only the long low plain between the hills. The air was cleaner even than the air just outside the walls of Pekin, which is cleaner than anything I have known in the south, a soft sweet glowing air which belongs to north China alone. Yet everywhere there was dust.

The valley was the colour of yellow dust; the small huts in the fields, the stone bridges, the shops, the hills which were sometimes covered with scrub, all were yellow when seen from a distance. There were three valleys,

radiating from the broken walls of Yenan, which was bombed savagely at intervals between 1939 and 1943, so that almost nothing remained. There were almost no trees, though I found peach-trees later in a court-yard, and there were pear-trees from which they made an excellent wine. There was date-wine, too, but there was only one grove of date-trees in the whole valley. For the rest it was a hard barren land, the river too low at this season to irrigate the fields, but when autumn came the river would flood its banks. It was the last place in the world where you would expect to find the administrative centre of a communist empire.

From the airfield you see nothing—no houses, no caves, only the soft contours of the yellow mountains. There are no sheds where your baggage is examined, for only once in ten or eleven days does an airplane come here from Pekin, and all aeroplanes come on official business. You expect to find a walled city when you have left the airfield, but what you see from the road is only the broken desolation of uninhabited walls. You begin to realise that there is no city, and that Yenan is no more than a vast cluster of caves with here and there a large stone administrative office built recently, as though the Yenanese possessed an invincible desire to put themselves on the map. You find Yenan on Chinese maps with extreme difficulty. It is not called Yenan, but Fushih, which is an old name now restored; and when you wander through the dusty roads where there are mat-shed shops and ask where you are, they will answer that you are in Tufuchuan, which means according to some the Spring of the Beancurd and to others the Spring of Tu Fu, after the greatest of Chinese poets who wandered disconsolately through these hills. Most of all you notice the hills with their long regular lines of caves and steep pathways. It is

all a yellow wilderness, and somehow the very wildness of the place, the absence of motor-cars and great buildings, strikes you as pleasant and even delightful. The Communists claim that they rule over a population nearly as large as the population of the United States of America. It is delightful to find that they are ruled, not from a giant city, but from a lost valley.

There is a river, but no sampans come down it. In midsummer it is thirty foot broad and three or four inches deep. The only boat I saw was moored to both banks and used as a bridge. Women washed clothes by the river, small children paddled in it and old men clung desperately to the slippery stepping-stones. It was so small a river that you hardly noticed it when you flew over it. What you noticed was the steep loess cliffs, which glowed at all hours of the day but best of all at sunset: they hemmed you in on all sides, and there were moments when they seemed hard and menacing, and other moments when their soft contours were charming. Their colours were always changing. There were depths upon depths of yellow in those hills. It was easy to imagine that men were content to stay there. You would look out for the sunset and the afterglow, and at dawn again they glowed with an entirely different light. At midday, in the dust and the heat-haze, they seemed not to be there at all—they were crumbling, or had already crumbled. Soft earth, so soft that you could dig into it with your finger-nails, but sometimes at the foot of the hills you would come upon massed layers of hard white rock.

The dull blue clothes of the people fitted in perfectly with the land, and the people themselves seemed to belong there, as the Spaniards seem to belong to Spain, the men of Provence belong to southern France and the Welsh to Wales. The land looked old and overworked: occasionally

you came upon peasants who looked older even than the land. It was bare enough in summer; in winter, at the time of frost and floods, it would look unendurably barren except for its clear skies. But even so, after wandering round it for a few days, you felt that it was a place to stay in, where you could dig your roots deep and attend quietly to the changing of the seasons.

III A LETTER

"I HAVE come to the end of the world—we are imprisoned by these loess hills, and with the very greatest difficulty can we believe there is any world other than this. It is the oddest impression. You feel that you have come to a place so ancient, more ancient than anything else in China, and its very ancientness makes it impossible to move away from it. It is very much like the surrealist paintings you used to see before the war. And everything is in slow motion—the horsemen ride across the valley and over the river in slow motion, and people walk slowly. They walk slowly in Pekin, because it is a habit there; but here they walk slowly because of the heat. The sky is a deep, ever so deep blue. The starlings chatter in the willows, and there is no breath of air to shake the leaves. Dogs and pigs lie in the shade of stones. There are perhaps sixty thousand people here, but you don't see them—they are hidden in the caves.

"Of course it *is* the most ancient place in China. It was among these strange flat-topped yellow hills that the Chinese began their journeys. I am amazed by the curious resemblance of these hills to the temples in Pekin. The temples are supposed to be modelled on tents, but there

is no record that the Chinese ever lived in tents. But the hills have the same golden roofs, when the winter wheat is ripe, and the sides are notched and edged to give room for more fields, and it is a little like the flaring roofs in the imperial palace. Unconscious race memory? It may be. You have the oddest impression of a place *which has remained unchanged.* This is what is surprising, because I thought of Yenan as a small walled city—there are no walls, there is no city, everything bombed, except the caves and a few offices, like the bank and the military headquarters.

"I have seen Chu Teh, and hope to see the others. What amazes me still is that out of all this ancient earth they are building up something entirely new in China. If you came here and wandered about these dusty roads, you would think you had come to some abandoned place where no one would ever travel. There is an old fortress-like temple on the bluff, and a perfect pagoda. . . ."

IV RED VIRTUE IN THE DATE GARDEN

CHU TEH came along the path through the date-trees, limping a little, wearing a dark blue cotton coat, blue cotton trousers and a blue cap. It was dusk. In this light his face had the colour of old bronze, very dark, and he was smaller than I had expected. He grinned and shook hands, and then you noticed with a shock that he was unlike the early portraits, he had grown much older and you could only recognise him by the boyish smile and the broken nose.

We had come a long way from the clustered huts and caves which is all that can be seen of Yenan. In the dusk

the starlings went wild, the caves disappeared, there was only the dark outline of the yellow loess cliffs. The sky was dark, and sometimes you saw a wolf prowling in the distance or a solitary white-turbaned horseman coming along the river bank. They said Chu Teh lived in a date garden. There was no sign of a date garden for miles. And then suddenly, very blue against the sand-coloured hills, you saw the date-trees and a long low earthen wall with two pillars. On each there was inscribed the Chinese characters for "Date Garden". It was the headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief of all the Communist armies in China.

He looked nearly all his sixty-five years, and he resembled none of the photographs taken by Agnes Smedley and Edgar Snow. He was unshaved; there was no beard, but there were a few faint bristles on his chin. You thought at first he was an old farmer, who had seen many wars and had come at last into this date garden in northern Shensi for a long rest before he died. He gave no impression of power, but he did give an impression of dignity and composure, and a kind of quietness. You noticed telegraph wires among the date-palms, and you wondered what the devil they were doing there, and he said nothing but walked slowly towards a cave in the hills. He had small bright eyes—Edgar Snow says they are large, but they are small nevertheless—and there was something bird-like even in that slow limping walk which led up to a terrace near the caves from where you could look down on the darkening valley. When he took off his cap, you saw that his hair was thinning, but it was still jet-black, and when he smiled he had the teeth of a young boy in the face of an old peasant. He was a good man, a *hao jen*, and you wondered why he kept a few soldiers round the place.

He spoke very quietly and confidently, in a husky voice,

and sometimes there was in it I do not know what note of disturbing sombreness, as of a man who knows that date-palms live for ever and all men die young. He was so obviously the good farmer that you were amazed by the legends that had grown up around him. Was it true that he had led the Long March? Was it true that he assisted Ts'ai Ao to dethrone Yuan Shih-kai? Was it true that once in Yunnan he had lived in great state, with concubines and opium-pipes and immense wealth? Was it true that he had directed the Hundred Regiment attack against the Japanese, and countless other attacks. They were all true enough, but it was hard at first to reconcile the old farmer with the legends.

It was growing dark, the moon was rising and there was only a single soldier standing like a shadow against the low wall. The battle of Shihpingchieh had come to an end a week before. It was a bloody, positional engagement which lasted a month before the Communists retreated northward. The Kuomintang official newspapers announced that there had been 100,000 casualties on both sides. It was positional war with a vengeance. In *Red Star Over China* Edgar Snow quoted General Peng Teh-huei: "Static warfare must be avoided. In a lengthy positional war the enemy has every advantage, and in general the chances of partisan success diminish in proportion to the duration of the battle." The Kuomintang were credited with having thirty tanks and ten bombing planes. Up to that time the Communists had never fought positional wars on any large scale. Why did they fight them now?

Chu Teh answered: "Why not? We had to hold up their advance—they were getting swell-headed. They forgot we are a strong army and capable of positional warfare. There were very good strategical reasons why we should hold them up. Shihpingchieh is an important

nerve-centre. The enemy did not know we would defend it, did not know our strength, was led blindly into the trap. It lasted a month, and stopped quite a lot of their energy. The casualties were less than the Kuomintang have recorded. We lost 10,000. They lost more."

Of the fate of the prisoners he said: "They killed the prisoners they captured. We did not need to kill the prisoners we captured. There is never any need to kill the prisoners we capture. They are fascists." He said "fascists" with a faint note of bitterness, hiding the real bitterness. The voice became louder and tougher. "They kill and arrest everywhere. They have prisons and secret police everywhere. We must have an end to the secret police and we must have a democratic government. If the Kuomintang had carried out the People's Consultative Council's agreements in February, there would never have been the civil war. There are three agreements—the reform of the government along democratic lines, the reorganisation of the armies and the cease-fire agreements. The Kuomintang violated these agreements, rejected democratic reforms and insisted on maintaining its dictatorship on a nationward scale *including our liberated areas*. There was a meeting called to congratulate the success of the People's Political Consultative Council's success. They sent in their hired thugs to attack the great poet Kuo Mo-jo and half a dozen others, including Li Kung-po.* Do you like it? Our Chinese Kuo Mo-jo is like your Bernard Shaw. Do you like it?"

He spoke with energy, but very quietly. It was growing dark. An oil-lamp with a brown paper shade was placed on the table among the cups of tea. A soldier came and threw a thin coat over his shoulders. You could see only the dark face in the glow of the lamp. He went on: "We

*Murdered by Kuomintang officers in July 1946.

don't want to fight a civil war, but their troops attack us, they close down all our newspapers in Pekin and Shanghai, and they keep on arresting and murdering us and breaking agreements. What else can we do but resist? I say deliberately they are fascists. Under a fascist dictatorship how can we realise peace?"

I said: "Both sides are stiffening, and as far as I can see we are in danger of a civil war that may last ten years."

"If there is no democratic government, it may well last ten years. The Kuomintang must keep their political agreements. If they would set up a democratic government according to the Foreign Ministers Conference, the civil war would end at once. We cannot—we must not have a fascist government ruled by one man and a small party clique. When General Marshall first came to China, there was great hope for democracy, but for some reason America has not supported the decisions of the P.C.C. We want democracy and nothing else. As for the help the Americans have given the Kuomintang, let bygones be bygones—we will not quarrel about the past. The Kuomintang couldn't fight us if they didn't get gasoline for their aeroplanes and troopships for their troops. I cannot understand why America should want to support a dictatorial government. All over the world it is a question of the realisation of democracy—and democracy means a coalition government. Democracy doesn't mean secret police, dictatorship, tortures, murders and the disappearance of people everywhere."

He was still speaking quietly, but when he mentioned the secret police his voice rose. He would mention them again and again, so that they were like an accompaniment throughout the long four-hour conversation at night.

I said: "There is an impasse somewhere, and it must be solved."

"How would you solve it?"

"I don't know enough, but I would guess three things are necessary. The whole Chinese army reduced immediately to a token army. For the moment the Chinese Army cannot fight against any of its neighbours—America, Britain or Russia. Put it on the frontiers of China, and it cannot fight. Put it inside China—it can only fight Chinese. Would you be prepared to dissolve the Communist army altogether, or to a small token army?"

He thought for a while, grinned and said: "Yes, if the Kuomintang do the same. I agree that we cannot fight foreign powers, and the army is only good for fighting between ourselves. Why not dissolve the air force and navy—we cannot fight foreign powers with them?"

"There are two other things that seem to me necessary," I went on. "The leaders on both sides should go. A democracy is best run by ordinary people. The leaders have far too much prestige. The prestige of Aristides in ancient Greece was too great—so the people got rid of him. I think it was the same thing with Churchill. It was necessary to get rid of him. The country is too small to bear the weight of its great men. Would you be prepared to go, if the Kuomintang leaders also went?"

He answered quickly: "It is not just a question of deposing some of the leaders. The Communist Party has 1,200,000 members in China. The Kuomintang has a large membership. The leaders are not important, the parties are important."

"There is a very real danger which comes from the tremendous prestige of the leaders on both sides. Would you and Chairman Mao Tse-tung be prepared to go if the leaders on the other side also went?"

"Yes, if there was a real danger, we would be prepared to go."

"Thirdly, there must be free elections, as there are in America and England."

His face lit up.

"I agree entirely, but the government should not be a government which carried out 'false democracy', and the democratic practices of the Kuomintang are all false."

We had not got very far, because as things were in China none of the three propositions seemed workable. They were probably necessary: it is possible that there was no other solution, but it was improbable that any of these things would be carried out in the near future. China is not like France, which had deposed its greatest leader and cut down its army and had free elections. China was at the mercy of forces over which the people had no control. But it was good to see Chu Teh agreeing with the propositions which had been on my mind for a long time. He rubbed his chin, grinned and drank some tea. It was very strong tea. I could still see only the dark reddish-brown face behind the oil-lamp.

More than anything else now he resembled the old farmer. He was an old man, he had seen many wars and he preferred to live among his date-palms; he was looking out into the distance, the moon had risen over the black cliffs, and the soldier was still standing by the low parapet and the wall.

"Let us go back to what we have been saying," he said. "I agree we must dissolve the army, or at least make it much smaller. But how can we dissolve their secret police? We have no secret police, no torture chambers. We can only get rid of these things with a democratic government. How can we get a democratic government? There are elements in America which are supporting Chiang Kai-shek against the people. I have met General Marshall. He

came to Yenan. We trust him, but we do not understand why America is supporting the Kuomintang against us. If for one month America refused to support the Kuomintang armies, there would be an end to the civil war."

I mentioned the violations which had been committed, according to Executive Headquarters, on both sides. He said: "I emphatically deny that there have been violations of the truce on our side."

I was surprised by this, and asked whether there were not sometimes moments when communications between the widespread and decentralised communist areas became difficult. Orders from headquarters were perhaps not always carried out.

"There may be delays of two or three days," he answered, "but there is no difficulty of communication. We have radios."

"What are the possibilities of peace?"

"If we can extend the truce now or later, there may be peace. At some time or other it may be possible to get together and work out a peaceful solution."

It was growing darker and colder, and we went into the cave. There was no furniture, no maps and no pictures except at the very end, where there was a small table and three battered sofas whose springs pushed out through the cloth. The oil-lamp was put on the table. You could see him more clearly now, for the walls were whitewashed and reflected the oil-lamp. He looked older than ever, but he looked stronger. He said:

"We are not an independent government. We are a temporary government, without consuls or any official intercourse with foreign powers. Yet there are 130,000,000 people in the liberated areas. We want international intercourse and we want trade, but we have only three

ports, Weihaiwei, Chefoo and Lungho. We would like foreigners to come here, and we guarantee their freedom of movement, and we guarantee freedom to all missionaries. We want trade—international trade. We will not confiscate and we will not break our agreements. . . . In our border areas production is continually increasing."

I asked him to define Chinese communism, for it was evident that communism in China differed from communism elsewhere.

He said: "Chinese communism is democracy plus capital."

I very nearly jumped out of my seat.

"It is quite easy to explain," he went on. "The Chinese communists do use the marxist theory in their analysis of social, political and economic conditions in China. The conclusions they draw are those which answer the needs of the people. There is not yet any marxist communist theory in actual practice—it is still in fact largely a capitalist system. In China today we support the capitalist system, because today the communist system of Marx is no more than an ideal. The only prospect of communism lies in the distant future. To be communist now would not be realistic. China today cannot realise such a system. Today, the system which can be carried out and is needed by the people is democracy with the free development of capital. We must develop our capital resources, and increase the wealth of the people, and raise their livelihood; and we can only do this by industrialisation and foreign investment. Our programme has always been to find out what people want and to satisfy their needs—it was only by doing this that we could be successful against the Japanese. We will not confiscate the wealth of the capitalists, but we will not allow big trusts to be formed. We want democracy, free elections

and an end to the feudal rule which the Kuomintang has inherited from the Manchus."

Saying this, he had put on a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles and resembled the old farmer no longer. He was an elderly professor, who spoke quietly and distinctly and a little wearily, as though he knew beforehand that there was so much distrust against Red China abroad that it was impossible to make them realise that communism was no longer the immediate objective in north China.

He went on: "How can we exist without capital? Our standard of living is so low. We must have the means of production to raise the standard of living of the peasants, and we cannot have it without capital. We are not against private capital, and we cannot follow the Russian model." And then, later: "This is not communism—this is the new democracy."

It was growing late, the lamp flickered on the rickety table and he looked more than ever the elderly professor who had returned after an exhausting lecture. A soldier came in and handed him a slip of paper. He glanced at it, and in silence handed it back again, and we were still somewhere at the end of a long low whitewashed tunnel. He talked about the Long March.

"They keep on thinking of us at that time as small guerrilla units," he complained. "We were not small guerrilla units—we were a comparatively large army, and so our activities were different from those of the Russian guerrillas during the war. We were an army continually increasing in numbers, because more and more villagers came to join us. Through the whole journey we relied for our intelligence on the villagers, and they gave us food, transport and supplies. We had little time for training. The training came largely on the field. We had some well-trained officers. Both Peng Teh-huei and I were old Kuo-

mintang officers who went over to the Communists when we realised that the Kuomintang was simply a machine of oppression. During the revolution of 1911 I was a company-commander. When the Yunnanese revolted against Yuan Shih-kai I was already in command of a regiment. I was a member of Dr. Sun Yat-sen's *Tung Men Hui,* a forerunner of the Kuomintang. Afterwards we were always fighting against the war-lords. We were regular soldiers first and partisan leaders afterwards.

"Our tactics developed gradually. Partly they came from our experiences in the regular army, and they came too from books. One book which impressed us largely was a book on the American war of independence. But it was not books or technical knowledge which were most useful—more useful than anything was the creative ability of the masses. We fought for political aims, our tactics depended on political aims. During the Long March we wanted to get to the north-east as quickly as possible, because it was from there that the greatest danger from the Japanese arose, and this was what the people wanted. We had artillery, mountain guns and mortars. We were not really guerrillas—we fought positional wars in Hunan, Kweichow, Szechuan and Kansu. We were a real army then, and we are a real army now."

For years I have been obsessed with the beauty and revelation of character which comes from Chinese calligraphy, and I was glad when he showed me some of his handwriting. It was very much what might be expected, good handwriting, heavy and dark, the characters crowded together, the down-strokes thick and determined, each character over an inch high. There was the beauty of ruggedness and heavy deliberation, and more than anything else of determination. It was his commonplace book. He turned over the pages slowly, the thick

local-made paper crackling under thumb and forefinger. On each page there appeared a character so perfectly in keeping with the man that the revelation was complete. Then very slowly he put down the book, which contained heaven knows what secrets of diplomacy and military affairs, and we went out into the garden, past the solitary guard on the parapet, the date-trees and the small gate. There were no signs of the guards. The stars shone, and some low clouds were moving up the valley in the west.

Chu Teh, which means "Red Virtue" has to his achievements a march greater than any accomplished by Ghenghiz Khan. He does not look like the great military leader; he has no ties, no gestures, no dramatic flare. Somehow the photographs had never suggested the heavy reddish-brown colour of the deeply tanned face; they showed neither the smile nor the firmness nor the slow voice. The greatness of the man was not apparent, and he remained the old farmer till very slowly the accumulation of so much patience and quietness and instinctive strength revealed the man in his direct simplicity. This was not Feng Yu-hsiang's simplicity, which is infinitely complex. He was a farmer who had planted his trees, and whatever storms came, he was determined they would grow.

This was not greatness as we are accustomed to measure greatness. He was incapable, I think, of turning on suddenly and capriciously any personal power. He had no mannerisms—he had killed the marionette, or perhaps he was too old, and the marionette no longer possessed any validity. When you are sixty-five and have spent all your life fighting and see no end to the fighting, it would be strange if you continued to think in terms of drama. There was no drama—only a great impatience and sadness. Once he escaped from arrest by throwing a white towel round his waist and shouting: "I am the cook. Why kill me,

when I can prepare such good food for you?" Today, he could no longer disguise himself as a cook. He seemed to have no love for power, and the only concession he ever made to his title of commander-in-chief was to wear occasionally a drab purple cloak with a ragged fur collar. You do not grin like a boy unless you have a good conscience. Among the date-palms and in the great silence of the cave-tunnel he gave the impression still of an old peasant who was simply saying the things that were on his mind.

A wolf was prowling on the walls of the garden when we went out; it stood there, shaggy and thin and black against the moonlight, then suddenly jumped away and disappeared in some undergrowth. As the jeep rolled through dust-clouds towards the river, some more wolves appeared, but they too scattered. A cold wind came down the valley, the date garden disappeared, there was only the moonlight, the hills and the darkness of the plains between the black cliffs. Once a candle gleamed in a cave high up the mountainside. When the candle went out, the valley looked lonelier than ever.

V TEMPLE AND PAGODA

YENAN is dominated by its pagoda, which has the same colour as the surrounding loess, very tall and slender when seen from a distance and curiously commanding. Against that bright summer air, standing on the chalk-coloured buff, nothing could be more perfect. It is not, like the spires of European cathedrals, an incitement to spiritual things. It is of the earth, earthy, neither too high nor too low, and like the other pagodas you see all over northern China it proclaims a kind of dignity to the mountain, and

nothing more; for nearly all pagodas are set on the heights of mountains, to attract your attention, to give you a visible point of support, to make you see the mountain contours more clearly and to show you that men are important in the scheme of things, for the man-made pagoda makes the mountain more beautiful.

They said that the pagoda was first built in the Sung Dynasty. It may be true, but it gives the impression of being considerably older; and it is impossible to imagine a time when there was no pagoda there. It stands on the high buff at the intersection of three valleys, facing the old town whose walls have long ago disappeared, and the new town which has been battered into crumbling fragments of stone, only the broken walls left standing by the Japanese. For thousands of years there had been merchandise in these valleys. One of the main roads to the capital at Ch'ang-an lay through the south gate of the town. The T'ang Dynasty priests once carved their 10,000 buddhas in the neighbouring caves, and there are rumours that there are other caves, as yet unopened, in the neighbourhood. The pagoda dominates the valley for miles, and even in the distance, when you see it as a mere pinpoint, its place, its commanding presence are perfect. At sunset, when the winter wheat on the uplands glows, the pagoda glows with the same bright red-gold colour. Near Pekin, on the western hills, there are so many pagodas that you are bewildered, and do not know which way to turn. In Yenan there is one pagoda, complete and perfect in its solitude.

But on the opposite side of the river there is a temple which looks, from every angle, like a butcher's shop perched on the bluff. It is not a butcher's shop: the temple has fallen into ruins, and has been rebuilt to accommodate the priests who still remain there, a thing of flat

walls and square roofs—the ugliest thing in that delightful valley. Yet once the temple must have been a fortress; ledge upon ledge of stone wall and buttress crane down from the summit. From the valley you can see the old pilgrim paths, the broken gates, the granite steps. Once it was commanding, but it no longer commands anything. And when you have climbed up the mountain you are bewildered by the massive strength of the outside walls, and the crumbling idiocy of what lies inside them—the buddhas which seem to have been designed and painted by a country bumpkin, with the stuffing falling out of them. In comparison with the buddhas in the Cave of the Thousand Buddhas they are monstrous, not only made without feeling or devotion, but with incredible crudeness. It is impossible to imagine them worse, and it is difficult to understand why they have been allowed to remain. As they stand there in disorderly rows in low rooms that resemble cattle-sheds or morgues, some already fallen to the ground, others still spilling the straw stuffing, you feel that buddhism which has demonstrated its perfect attainments in a cave less than a mile away, has here reached the nirvana of idiocy. They are not buddhas, nor are they animals, nor are they men. They are the crumbling relics of something so outworn that they have lost all meaning. It was delightful to find, written in chalk on the wall above one of these disgusting creatures, the inscription: "O God of Heaven, since the aeroplanes are coming, why don't you run away?" One wished heartily that they had rushed away as fast as their straw-filled legs would carry them.

Someone had told me that in the main hall of the temple there was a perfect buddha in porcelain. It was true that there was a porcelain buddha, and for some reason this fat Laughing Buddha in white glazed stone, with red

ribbons tied round its neck, and offerings of fruit placed all round it, had become the main object of worship. The priest was anxious that no one should touch it, though he was perfectly prepared to allow you to touch anything else in the room. He said the buddha was very old and possessed magical qualities. Which was odd, for it could not have been more than forty years old and was almost certainly made in Manchester.

But as though to compensate for all this inanity there stood, in a dark corner of the room, an earth-god of bronze with an archaic smile. It might almost have been a Greek Apollo, so quiet and dignified, with the folds of the long gown carefully spaced, and the face giving signs of not yet being awakened, though it would awaken soon. It was odd to find it there, and one wondered how old it was, for certainly no one for many hundreds of years had made things in northern Shensi of such overwhelming beauty and simplicity. We took it into the sunlight and watched the rusted bronze absorbing the light, and then placed it gently in the dark corners of the temple.

There were other things in those weed-grown gardens. There was an enormous rusted bell which dated from the Ming Dynasty and which had been used until recently as an air-raid warning; there were stone monoliths with incredibly dexterous carving of inscriptions celebrating the virtues of long-dead emperors. From these gardens, overlooking low walls, you saw the three valleys, the chequered plains and the crumbling forts on all the hilltops. The sun was setting. The winter wheat was ripening, and somewhere in the distance a soldier was riding through a cloud of yellow dust to headquarters. When the dust settled, you noticed that the saddlecloth was arterial red—the only splash of colour among these mountains and valleys of soft yellows and softer greens.

VI THE SOLDIER

He came walking up the hill with a grey pack over his shoulders, his blue cotton uniform stained bright yellow with dust. He had a round red face, the colour of a red pippin, and he wore the uniform of the Communist Army, which is exactly the same as the uniform of all the other soldiers in China—the same blue and white enamel badge on his cap, which signifies the white sun in the blue sky, the same cut of the coat, the same puttees—but on one arm there was a small white square with the legend: 18 G A. The old Eighth Route Army has been transformed into the Eighteenth Group Army. He was about eighteen, and he walked up the hill looking in no way different from the soldiers in the south except that he looked better fed.

We watched him as he left the road, where the dogs were sleeping and the horses were plunging against the rock to avoid the only motor-car that had passed that day. He went down to the river, took off his wheat-straw sandals and bathed his feet. Then he waded through the river and climbed up the bank towards one of the caves in the hills, and for a long while we heard him singing. And for days afterwards you remembered the clear smile and the sound of the voice coming across the darkening valley.

VII THE DANCE IN THE PEACH ORCHARD

The *yangko* dance has an old history. It may be as old as historical China. There are songs in the *Book of Odes* which may have been danced to these simple steps and

simple drum-beats. Usually the dance was performed at the time of transplanting, and again at harvest, and at wedding festivals, wherever there were great feasts and ceremonies.

It cannot have changed very much through the centuries, but it was changing now. The dance remained, but the Communists were inventing a new kind of dance—the *yangko* was played at the beginning and the end, but in between there were short plays. These plays were occasionally acted separately and had grown up with the tremendous new interest in drama. Now the Communists were using the *yangko* dance and the play in a deliberate effort to change the old village customs. There were plays against witchcraft, illiteracy and bad habits; there were plays designed to show the necessity of increasing production, co-operatives, medical work in villages and sanitation. In the old *yangko* the leader held an open umbrella and was followed by long dancing lanes of boys and girls, heavily painted, in gaudy dresses. They raced from one court-yard to another, sang songs, danced to the sounds of a pigskin drum, and perhaps to fifes. The love dances were the best. In these the two lanes of boys and girls danced facing each other, swaying their bodies provocatively, clapping their palms on their knees, bending forwards or leaping backwards, while the clown buffooned and the audience beat time to the drums. Sometimes fireworks were let off. The dance differed slightly from village to village, but in essentials it was simply a slow dance—three steps forward and one back—which became more and more furious as the dance progressed. There were different interweaving patterns of the dance, and sometimes there were competitions between the villages. Also, the musical accompaniment could be changed at leisure, and from time to time new songs were

invented. Essentially, it was a robust dance for the young which may have had its origin in a fertility cult, a complex interweaving of two lanes of youngsters till finally they appeared once more, lips parted, sweat streaming from them, in two formal lines. The drums were played loudly and with abandon with the bare knuckles or a small weighted stick; and it was the thumping of the drums which gave the theme of these simple dances.

When the Communists came to northern Shensi in 1935, they watched the dances but did nothing to change them. They might never have changed them if there had been no war against Japan. In 1939 they began to realise that the dance could serve as the introduction and the finale of a new kind of propaganda, which would reach all the villages in the areas over which they ruled; for the villagers were known to have an extraordinary fondness for these dances, which they cultivated on every possible occasion. They began tentatively by replacing the leader with an umbrella (who may have represented the Emperor) by a farmer carrying farming implements. They allowed the love-dances to continue, but they insisted that there were other things as important, and they replaced the clown with a Japanese or a traitor. The first of the new *yangko* dances were deliberately designed to increase production, and the first of all was called: "Brother and Sister Cultivating the Virgin Land". It was a clever title, for "brother and sister" in Chinese folk-song have the significance of "lover and beloved", and increased production had never been so urgent.

The new play introduced between the old dances was purely experimental. It was to be performed in the open air, by a small group selected from the dancers, and it had to be written with extreme simplicity so that it could be followed easily by all the villagers. There was no tradition.

They took what they could from the west, and they improvised on the basis of the symbolic traditions of the Chinese stage. A farmer could suggest the presence of mountains by standing on his toes and shading his eyes; the crackle of machine-gun fire could be expressed by cymbals; animals were simply men wearing masks; but since the actors in the play wore their ordinary blue cotton costumes, how could you distinguish between them? You could, of course, make them announce to the audience that they were tax-collectors, government officials, farmers, labour heroes or people fleeing from the Japanese. It was not difficult, but it was a waste of time, and the traditional Chinese stage, by using deliberate artifices of gesture and symbolic costumes, had long ago got over this difficulty. But they never found a satisfactory solution.

In the peach orchard near the small house where Mao Tse-tung lives, the *yangko* dance was played. The setting was perfected, and because it had rained recently, the peach-leaves gave off a heavy scent. The audience formed a circle round the dancers. On one side there were western violins playing together with Chinese violins, on the other sides there were cymbals and flutes. The dancers came rushing in, tall Shensi boys with white knee-breeches, brightly coloured waistbands and green shirts, with their heads in coloured kerchiefs. They danced amazingly well, beating both sides of the drums and singing at the same time a song of welcome, which changed later into a song in praise of democracy and peace. The drum-beats became louder, the beat more insistent, and they were followed by boys and girls with heavily rouged faces who began to weave within the magic circle of the garden incredibly complex patterns to the tune of the fifes, the violins, the cymbals and the drums. You could recognise the ancient pattern of the love-dance, though the words had changed,

for they formed two lines which came together and parted, and raced and clapped hands and in general followed the pattern of the ancient steps of the dance; and though the songs had been changed, the imitation of the emotions of love remained. And then very suddenly, in a final roar of drum-beats, they departed and their places were taken by the protagonists of the interlude.

There were two interludes. The first was a comic movement in the drive against illiteracy, showing how a small farmer sends a letter from the town to his old father, saying that the price of beans had gone up. The old man could not read. He asked help from another farmer, and was told that the price of peas had gone up. He knows that if he leaves his fields near harvest-time he is in danger of losing his crops, but the price has gone up so much and he is so avaricious that he decides to set out with his peas. He goes to the town. He cannot find his son, and he discovers that the price of peas has not gone up at all. Cursing, he returns to the farm and discovers that his son has forestalled him, his crops are ruined, his daughter-in-law, who can read, is insulting him and life is no longer worth living. Some of this is spoken, but most of it is song. The audience is roaring with laughter—the old man is near tears, and even towards the end argues bitterly against book-learning. "You can't make children by book-learning, you can't raise crops by book-learning, it's all a waste of time." He dances round the ring in an agony of remorse, shaking his head, nervously lighting his long silver pipe, for ever bewildered by the magic power of the words he has misunderstood, until in the end, with the blissful smile of the initiated, he promises faithfully to learn to read.

It was a morality, and absurdly simple, but it was evidently effective. It was not a theoretical incident; it was

an incident that had happened very often, and it was played dramatically and effectively by actors who knew how to imitate the finest gestures of the peasants. They spoke in the local dialect, there were purely local jokes and though doors were opened according to the same gestures which take place on the Chinese stage and a twelve-hour journey on foot from the village to the town was accomplished in two minutes, it was clear that the audience could identify itself with the actors.

The second play was shorter and concerned two soldiers returning to headquarters with some pigs they had bought at market. The pigs were imaginary pigs, but the gestures of the soldiers as they pummelled the pigs with sticks along the dusty roads gave a curious air of reality to the scene. They rested, and suddenly discovered that they had one pig too many. They were nonplussed at first. Impossible to explain the presence of the pig. They argued. Probably the pig had joined them of its own free will. Perhaps it was lost, and they were doing it a service by bringing it to headquarters. They were also doing the soldiers a service. They decided to proceed on the journey with the additional imaginary pig, but when they reached headquarters questions began to be asked, and worse still one of the soldiers had lost his passport. The moral of the play was evidently that soldiers should not take pigs that do not belong to them, and should be very careful about their passports. According to the kind of lives which soldiers live all over China, the moral seemed well worth insisting upon.

And then the dancers came in again, the interlude was over and the pure dance, hardly modified at all, took the place of insistent propaganda. Once again there was the beat of the drums, the heavily painted faces, the swirl of skirts and waist-bands, and the clear voices of the singers.

The thumping of their feet on the earth, the small clouds of dust, the tremendous force of the drums—they were things that you remembered for long afterwards, because they seemed so appropriate to these thickset sturdy people. There was nothing professional in their dancing; they danced with a kind of natural abandon, and because they liked dancing, and because they were young. So had they danced in the time of Confucius, and so too would they dance when all our present quarrels are over.

VIII COMMUNIST GENERAL

He was Vice-Commander-in-Chief of the Border Armies, not tall, though he gave the impression of height, but dark and swarthy, and like nearly everyone else in Yenan he grinned like a boy. He had been ill of a stomach complaint for a long time, but looked healthy and even vigorous, and he wore the usual wheat-straw sandals and faded blue cotton coat without insignia. He walked heavily and determinedly; his hands were fine and covered with innumerable dark wrinkles, and sometimes when he spoke the eyes seemed to fill with pain. He was General Peng Teh-huei. He had been fighting since he was eighteen.

The military leaders in the Border Areas belong to no special type, but among them you notice very soon two dominant trends—those who resemble peasants, though sometimes they were never peasants, like Chu Teh, and those who resemble scholars, like Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-Lai, though they are scholars who have never taught or studied for any length of time. Peng Teh-huei resembled

a thickset peasant even to the heavy curve of the shoulders and the dark sunburned hands. He did not seem, like Chu Teh, to be completely at ease in the world; nor was he nervous. He was a man who had hated and fought passionately, but with a clear brain, with little education but immense driving force. He had led one of the four armies which composed the Long March, and now, as he spoke of those days which were already disappearing into legend, there was an odd sadness in his voice. The old voice came from the youngish face. So perhaps had Napoleon's generals spoken in the years before Waterloo, remembering the victories in Italy and the Nile.

He spoke about the past for more than three hours, delighting in his reminiscences.

"If you go back a long way, you can see how it all began. You have to go back to the time when Sun Yat-sen was still alive, and the Whampao Academy was being born, and from Canton there was being planned the long march to the north against the war-lords. It was 1923. Under Sun Yat-sen there was peace between the Communists and the Kuomintang, and in Whampoa Academy itself there were important Communist leaders like Chou En-lai, Lin Po-chu and Li Fu-chun.

"Sun Yat-sen had proclaimed that only a people's army could fight the war-lords in the north, and in fact it was a people's army which began the march from Canton. During the first stages of the march, until the army reached Wuhan, there was complete co-ordination between the Communists and the Kuomintang. The march had three main purposes: to resist foreign imperialism, particularly the Japanese, to wipe out the war-lords and create a democratic government. But when we reached Wuhan, it became clear that the right wing of the Kuomintang was not prepared to resist foreign imperialism, was indeed

prepared to make overtures with them. On April 12th, 1927, there was the Kuomintang *coup d'état.*

"The Great Revolution failed. There was a reign of terror, and hundreds of men like Tung Yen-ta, the leader of the Third Party, were arrested and later killed. The Kuomintang, instead of collaborating with the revolutionary forces, co-operated with the feudal forces in order to overthrow the revolutionary movement.

"There followed the Nanchang uprising, organised by General Yeh Ting and supported by Mme Sun Yat-sen and many other liberal elements. General Chu Teh, at that time, was only a regimental commander in Yeh Ting's armies. No one had ever heard of him till then. The uprising failed. The armies marched out of Nanchang against Kwangtung and were defeated in Tungchiang near Meihsien. Of the survivors Chu Teh led a bare thousand men through Kiangsi into Hunan.

"As I say it now, it is not very exciting—names of battles, places, marches. But they *were* exciting, though the old revolutionaries have gradually forgotten them. The battles all become one. But at this stage there occurred battles which are remembered by us, for suddenly Mao Tse-tung comes on the scene.

"In 1927 Mao Tse-tung was organising peasant self-defence corps in Hunan. At first they had no weapons—only sharp sticks, spears, bayonets. Later they were to capture rifles from the Hunan provincial troops. Mao Tse-tung was moving around the area of Tingchiang in eastern Hunan, and then he came south to Chingkansan, an extraordinary range of mountains, not very accessible, which produces two or three good crops a year and where you can live in some kind of isolation. Mao mobilised the peasants and redistributed the land. Chu Teh came up from the south and joined him. He had begun with hardly a

thousand soldiers, and by now he had hardly more than 2,000. Out of these 2,000 and the peasants on Chingkansan two regiments were formed—the 28th under Chu Teh, and the 31st under Mao. I have forgotten why these regiments were given these numbers. Perhaps there was no reason, or they wanted the enemy to think they had many regiments. It was the first time Mao Tse-tung had met Chu Teh, and it was the beginning of the formidable combination which was to be known later as Chu-Mao.

"So there were two regiments defending the mountain, and several guerrilla units armed with old spears and swords and whatever else they could lay their hands on. It was the winter of 1927. The Hunan provincial troops and the Kiangsi troops were sent against them, and there were even Yunnanese forces under Chu Peh-teh. It was the first of the annihilation campaigns. I wasn't there, but Lin Piao was there. Lin Piao, who comes from Hupeh, was a battalion commander of the 28th regiment under Chu Teh. He was unknown then. They were to hear about him later.

"We did not stay on the mountain. When we had broken their attacks, we attacked. We destroyed five regiments under Chu Peh-teh at a place called Yunghsin on the eastern borders of Kiangsi, and captured 7,000 rifles. This was the beginning of our military strength. Afterwards, in the spring of 1928, Chu Teh led his troops to southern Hunan, taking the main forces away from the mountain stronghold. Chingkansan was left now weaker than ever—there were only guerrillas and untrained troops to defend the mountain. The Kiangsi and Hunanese troops heard that the mountain was undefended. They brought between 20,000 and 30,000 troops against the mountain, against Mao Tse-tung and perhaps 400 well-trained guerrillas. This was all they had, but they

were well-entrenched, the peasants on the plains would work for them, and we managed to break up their supply lines.

"Remember that in those days there were no aeroplanes, no railways, no tanks, no trucks. The defenders knew the terrain and concealed the grain, and it was not impossible for them to put to flight armies vastly superior to theirs by sudden, devastating attacks. We had an excellent intelligence system, and besides Mao Tse-tung, whose military training came from the field, there were regular officers like Chang Tse-ching, who was later killed in action. At the battle of Wangyangchieh Mao Tse-tung and his guerrillas routed an army of 20,000 men. The victory partly belonged to Chang Tse-ching, who was regimental commander at the time, but it was Mao who organised the peasants and constructed a vast intelligence system and directed the campaign. The mountain was still in our hands. We waited for another annihilation campaign, for we had no strength at this time to attack.

"I say 'we' did this, but I was not there. I knew very little about what was happening until the third of the annihilation campaigns, in the winter of 1928. At this time Mao Tse-tung and Chu Teh left the mountain and went to Fukien and southern Kiangsi to organise the peasants. I was left in charge of the defences of Chingkansan.

"In July 1928 I had organised an uprising in Pingchiang in north-eastern Hunan. I heard about the defence of Chingkansan, and after the uprising failed, I led about a thousand men to join the mountain soldiers. By this time our forces had grown. I had a thousand men, and the peasants were flocking to the mountain, so that we had between 4,000 and 5,000 men altogether, with a considerable number of bayonets and rifles. But we were still weak in numbers compared with the enemy. They said

publicly they had 60,000 well-trained and well-equipped troops. They may have had about 45,000. At that time Chu and Miao were somewhere in western Fukien. The enemy had good leaders. Their officers were all regular Kuomintang officers. They had three armies, with Chu Peh-teh in command of the Third Army. But we defeated them, first in hundreds of skirmishes and later in battle. It was the first time the Kuomintang used radios: we did not even have telephones. Nevertheless we drove them away. Actually we never had radios at all until after the battle of Changsha in 1930. Even if we had had radios, we would not have known how to use them.

"We occupied Changsha for ten days in 1930. It started with the anniversary meeting at Pingchiang the year after the uprising. Ho Chien's troops arrived, but we routed them about six *li* away, and then decided to follow them. We had nothing to lose, and they were very frightened. Changsha was defended by five regiments—a total strength of about 30,000. To attack Changsha with our 10,000 was technically impossible—the city was difficult to attack and favours the defender—but our morale was high, and we were bitterly determined to show the war-lords that peasants can muster enough force to get through. We got through. We fought a nasty engagement on the Nanling river fifteen *li* from Changsha and attacked with bayonet charges, since our main weapons were bayonets. It was costly. We had between 2,000 and 3,000 casualties. There was fighting along the approaches to Changsha the whole day and part of the night, and even when we had entered the city, there was still fighting going on outside. It was a hard war, and in ten days Ho Chien was bringing so large a force against us that we evacuated.

"We had started from small beginnings. We were still small. In the Nanchang uprising we were still smaller.

After the defeat in Kwangtung, there was left only Chu Teh's troops numbering about a thousand and Mao Tse-tung's peasant guerrillas armed with spears and home-made bayonets—and there was the uprising I directed at Pingchiang. Now we had large resources in equipment, and we were beginning to think we were a real army. We withdrew from Changsha to southern Kiangsi. The enemy began to launch another annihilation campaign under the direct orders of Chiang Kai-shek. We defeated them, we captured their signal officers and began to learn how to use radio. We were 10,000 when we captured Changsha. Now we were at least 17,000, for our losses were more than made up by farmers and workers who joined the army.

"The uprising at Pingchiang was an entirely independent peasant uprising. I did not join the Communist Party till March 1928. I had no real military training, though I studied for a while in the Hunan Military College. Military schools are useful for giving you technical knowledge, but you learn more on the field, and battles are largely fought with morale—it was hatred of imperialism and warlordism that drove us on. The oppressing powers are always more powerful in military equipment, but they lack the morale of the oppressed. The American War of Independence lasted eight years. We modelled ourselves on the Americans, and were prepared to consider ourselves lucky if we could win in twenty years.

"We have never had any time to collect a history of our wars. I am giving you what I remember, and I cannot recollect all the details. In the Long March I was commander of the Third Group Army. We started from Kiangsi with 70,000 men, and when we reached northern Shensi there were no more than 10,000. Mostly they died from natural causes. In western Szechuan the air was so thin that we could hardly breathe, and in the

grasslands there were almost no villages and no people, and it was all a kind of desert and we often starved. Best of all the battles was the crossing of the Wu river in Kweichow. We were surrounded. We had already crossed the river, but the enemy lay on both sides of us. We drove back again across the river, and put half the enemy to flight, and then drove against those who were on the south bank. The Kuomintang forces were led by a good general, Wu Chi-wei—he had won many victories in the past, but we destroyed his army.

"The river was about 400 metres wide. There were five regiments of Kuomintang troops entrenched on the bank, and all the ferry-boats had been taken over to the opposite side. We silenced their guns with our own mortars and machine-guns, then one man swam across the river and brought a single boat back to our shore. We sent the boat back under heavy fire with twenty men in it—backwards and forwards until we had established a bridgehead of 300 soldiers. They knew we had landed, but in the dark they could not tell how many we were. Then we captured their ferry-boats, and put all the men we could spare into them, and routed them."

He could not remember all the details which had taken place in the famous crossing of the Tatu Bridge:

"It's a long time ago, and I cannot remember all of it. There were so many rivers—the Gold Sand river, the Hsiang river, the Wu and the Yangtse. I remember the bridge was about 140 metres wide, with six or seven iron chains placed about thirty centimetres apart. It was a shaky bridge at all times, and the current was too strong for us to cross by rafts or pontoons. So the soldiers crossed one by one, hanging down from the bridge, hand over hand, their only weapons hand-grenades and pistols, for a rifle would be useless. The current was terribly fast. The bridge

was a hundred metres above the level of the water. I cannot remember very much, but I remember the people falling into the water, and there was nothing we could do to help them."

We had lunch then. He ate little except milk and porridge; he still suffered from stomach ulcers—part of the legacy of the Long March. He talked about the recent changes of tactics in the Communist Army.

"We have been fighting guerrilla wars for twenty years, but we have also been fighting positional wars. The Kuomintang still regards us as partisans and guerrillas, but the battle of Shihpingchieh should have taught them better. We have American equipment now—captured from the Kuomintang.

"We cannot be defeated, but it is probably true that we cannot win. We cannot be defeated because we have the support of the people, who are the source of our soldiers, our supplies and our intelligence. They can harass the enemy and keep all intelligence away from the enemy. Then we have another thing which they have not got—the close co-ordination between the officers and the soldiers, and their determination for self-sacrifice. Lastly, we allow our commanding officers tremendous flexibility in command.

"There were times in the past when we had heavy equipment, or captured it from the Japanese, and then we had to destroy it, because we could not use it. Sometimes the same thing happens now. What is the use of having a tank when you have no gasoline, no spare parts, no repair shops? We burn it, because the enemy would use it against us if they recaptured it. We have done the same with heavy guns. So, in general, we avoid positional war because our troops are not so well equipped as theirs and often we find ourselves numerically inferior. We have

no constant source of supplies, as they have. At the very beginning of the battle of Shihpingchieh we had only one regiment in the town, reinforcements did not arrive till twenty days later. The Kuomintang had American equipment, but their morale was low; and so we fought them without any great difficulty and held up their advance for a month. We can do this whenever we like. We are an army now, and because we are fighting for democracy, we have never been tougher or more determined."

IX MAO TSE-TUNG'S HEAD

I WAS beginning to think that it would never be possible to see Mao Tse-tung. They said he was busy, the threat of civil war hung more menacingly than ever on China, and he was working through the night on papers and despatches. You reminded yourself that Yenan was the administrative centre for a population of over a hundred millions: on those clear summer mornings, when the air was bright and deathly still, it did not look like it, but it was nevertheless true. The destiny of China was being decided in Nanking and Yenan, the small yellow backwater which had been forgotten by the world.

Mao had flashed past in an overladen jeep on the day I arrived. He looked strong and well in his blue cotton clothes, the face dark-tanned by the sun, and I noticed that he had large hands which clutched the side of the jeep as it went through pot-holes of yellow dust. They shrugged their shoulders and said: "You probably won't see him again."

Meanwhile there were other people one could see, and in the intervals there was Mao's book, *The Coalition*

Government, to read. It was a curiously impressive book, written in a dryly humorous style, without bitterness. It was very long, and they said the whole book had been delivered as a speech in a single day—nearly 200 pages of it. There were moments when you came face to face with the man, moments of quietly passionate fervour, without rhetoric. He did not grow larger as you read the book, but he grew more human. You began to see how his mind worked.

"Our starting-point," he wrote, "is to serve the Chinese people earnestly and wholeheartedly, and never to be severed from the people; to set out always from the point of view of serving the people's interests, not serving the interests of a small group or oneself: and to give equal responsibility to the people and the guiding organisation. Experience during the last twenty years has taught us that all tasks, policies and methods that were correct corresponded to the demands of the people at that definite time and place, and all that were incorrect were separate from the people's will."

Or again:

"Our comrades must not think that what is unintelligible to us is also unintelligible to the masses. Very often the masses stride ahead of us, and want urgently to advance forward, while our comrades do not act as leaders of the broad masses, but on the contrary reflect the opinion of some backward interests. Every comrade should be taught to comprehend that the highest criterion of all our statements and activities is whether they correspond to the highest interest of the broadest masses, and whether they are supported by the broadest masses. Every comrade should be taught to comprehend that as long as we rely on the people, firmly believing in the infinite creative power of the people, then we may be able

to overcome all difficulties, no matter how serious they are, and no enemy will be able to overwhelm us, but will be overwhelmed by us."

And then finally, in the only note of passionate protest in the book, which is also a note of passionate faith:

"They must understand that no matter how tortuous the path may be, the independence and liberation of the Chinese people will be realised and the time for it is already at hand. The great aspirations of countless martyrs during the last 100 years must be fulfilled *by our generation.* Whoever desires to prevent these aspirations from being translated into fact, that man will fail."

Meanwhile the undeclared war was going on. Chungking and Yenan radios were bitterly assailing one another. We sat over the radios and wondered which particular incident would later be taken by historians as the beginning of the war. It was neither peace nor war—only a ragged nervous interval, while we held our breaths and prayed that the final incident would never take place.

Three days after my arrival I went to a play based on an incident from *All Men are Brothers.* In front of me in the audience was Mao Tse-tung. It was not difficult to recognise him; he had long blue-black hair, fine cheekbones and an immense sweeping forehead. He was enjoying himself completely. No one came in to bring telegrams concerning the civil war. At one moment when the feudal landlord was abusing the captain-general of the peasants, he became lost in a horrible fit of giggles, turned to his companion and seemed to be in danger of sliding under his seat.

The play was splendid and exceedingly simple. You knew that the captain-general of the peasant armies would inevitably capture the fortress of the white-faced feudal chief, and that the feudal lord and all his sons would be

scattered to the winds. You knew, or you thought you knew, that virtue would be rewarded; and it was only a question of waiting four and a half hours before the good received their rewards. But four and a half hours, looking at the stage whose setting was a gigantic square of bright blue cloth seen under arc-lamps, is a long time. It became increasingly necessary not to be blinded and to seek some kind of rest by looking at Mao Tse-tung's head.

It was a good head, and unusually expressive. The shoulders looked powerful, and perhaps because he is a Hunanese he made no effort to hide his emotions. I have seen photographs of a man's back that are more revealing than his face. It might be possible—the clanging of the instruments and the high-pitched voices and the fantastic richness of the colours of the stage were becoming intolerable at times—it might be possible, I told myself, to learn something about him just by considering the head.

Other reflections occurred to me. The play was a morality, as primitive in its calculated simplicity as *Everyman*. It was also very relevant to the times, for there was no doubt in the minds of anyone in the audience that the captain-general of the peasant forces represented Mao Tse-tung and the white-faced old man with the long grey beard represented the Generalissimo. But chiefly it was a morality, and like all good moralities there was represented for you the whole world: not only peasants and soldiers and chariot-driving generals, but cooks and servants and gatemen and officials. They were all there, and though they wore fantastically embroidered clothes, they were recognisedly the same all over the world. It was a play describing the passions of the people and virtue triumphant. The heroes wore the finest silk, the finest dragon-painted gowns; the evil wore ugly red and black

masks which gave them the appearance of tigers. It was Shakespearian and impenitently romantic; and seeing Mao giggling almost to sickness it was possible to come to one conclusion about him—he remained the romantic, in spite of the hard-headed deliberate speeches which are so organised and biting that they read like the works of Mr. Sidney Webb.

It was an opinion that was to grow with time. I was glad I had seen him first at the play. I knew that he was Hunanese, I knew that he wrote first-rate poetry and I had suspected for a long time that he had deliberately or undeliberately modelled himself on the old Chinese heroes, believing that democracy and socialism and perhaps communism—though there was little enough evidence in his speeches that he was a Communist according to any existing pattern—were things that demanded heroes; could be fought for with heroism; were the deliberate and essential aims of heroism in the twentieth-century world. Impenitently romantic. It seemed possible. Or if not the impenitent romantic, then the impenitent dreamer who had already peopled the world of his imagination with innumerable Chinese peasants who no longer feared their feudal lords.

Meanwhile the Chinese play went on. The scene would change instantaneously: a girl would come to the front of the stage, open an imaginary door with a twist of her fingers and at once you were in the house. A moment later you have gone through three court-yards and have reached the garden; you know you have reached the garden because someone takes up a perfectly imaginary flower from the boards. Then instantaneously a carriage is waiting: there are two yellow flags with a cart-wheel drawn in black on each. The captain-general appears, lifts his baton and steps into the chariot; you know he has entered the

chariot because he lifts his right leg generously and the two men carrying the flags walk by his side. You know he is certain of victory by the extravagant song he makes through his black beard.

The play goes on. There are interludes of pure comedy. A spy comes from the peasants to find out the situation in the citadel, and talks with the watchmen, who notice that his hands are clean. He says he is a peasant, but peasants do not have clean hands. Then who is he? They ponder at great length and decide to have as close a look as possible at his hands; perhaps he is a peasant after all. They invite him to play the finger-game, which is an outrageous and noisy game played at all Chinese *weinfests,* in which you suddenly throw out your hands with several fingers extended at the same time that your opponent does the same thing. You have to guess the number of fingers your opponent has thrown out, and he has to guess the number of fingers you have thrown out. It is an indescribably silly game, but nothing could be more amusing on the stage. This game can produce more noise per person than any other game in the world. At *weinfests* it is merely ridiculous; on the stage it is amazingly funny, and threw most of the audience nearly out of their seats. But the watchmen still could not determine whether he was merely a peasant, and tried palmistry. It made little difference. They were bewildered by his hands, could make nothing of them and departed at last completely tricked by the spy, who was the son of the captain-general of the rebels.

After the comedy there was always an impressive entrance. The captains come in with their nodding plumes, their crowns of emeralds, their robes of flowing jade and red-gold, with their wives and ministers. The handsome youth whom you last saw in a gown of ruby enters now in a

white gown embroidered with yellow racing dragons. With every scene there is a change in costume for the leading actors, so that you fail to notice that the background is simply a sky-blue sheet which burns the eyes—other things burn the eyes more effectively. The music is like an incantation; it keeps you awake, but it sends you half-asleep, an exceedingly repetitious music which possesses neither harmony nor melody nor any melodic theme. By this time you have forgotten that you have been gazing entranced at the stage for over three hours. There are no pauses, no *entr'actes*. You are assailed by rich colours, by the blare of trumpets, by the roar of the audience which has by now completely identified itself with the actors. You begin to look again at the back of Mao Tse-tung's head, or some of the other heads in the front row.

There was Chu Teh; there was Lin Po-chu, the chairman of the government of the border region which extends round Yenan, who looked like the manager of a bank; there was Tung Pi-wu, Communist delegate to Chungking, who resembled a professor; there was vice-chairman Li Ting-ming, an old landlord who sucked continually at a silver-stemmed pipe and wore a blue cotton cap rakishly in spite of his sixty-seven years; there was General Peng Teh-huei, who had led one of the four armies which comprised the Long March, the only man there who resembled in the least the popular idea of a Communist guerrilla, with his rough laughing brutal peasant face, and his fine hands. There was Mme Mao Tse-tung who was (though no one will believe it) more beautiful than Mme Chiang Kai-shek. There was Mao Tse-tung, in a well-cut brown Sun Yat-sen uniform, looking up at the actors as he leaned forward, planting his elbows on his knees, grinning continually. And behind them, in vast crowds, were soldiers and girls and peasants and farmers and government

leaders and students. In those rare moments when Mao Tse-tung was not about to fall from his seat, you noticed that he put his palms together in the attitude of someone praying and his face was grave. You wondered where you had seen it all before. Then you remembered that the boy at his first party had changed instantly to the vicar in the parish hall who would make a speech in a moment and call on everyone present not to forget their subscriptions for the harvest offerings.

But he made no speeches. When the citadel was attacked at last, when the actors with wooden swords had capered round the stage, when all the feudal landlords lay dead or were supplicating mercy on their knees, when the walls disappeared in the smoke of blinding saltpetre flames and the dead bodies had risen and run into the wings, when the last procession of virtuous peasants and smiling heroes had circled the stage, everyone got up and walked out into the night. I saw only one soldier with a bayonet—the leaders of what is known as Red China were not being guarded very efficiently; or perhaps there was no need to guard them. Mao bowed to several people he knew: he was still the vicar. A moment later he passed me again outside, looking grey and huddled in the darkness as he tried to find his place on the waiting lorry. He bowed, then disappeared. The head-lamps went on from the two jeeps, and then once again the night was blinding with light.

X THE GUERRILLA

He was thin and dark, had a nimble mind and spoke English perfectly, or so nearly perfect that it made no difference. He was born in Palembang in Sumatra, but for

nine years he had heard nothing from his parents, and he had studied for a while in Hongkong. I have forgotten what fortunes of war brought him to Yenan. In the early days of the war he had been with the guerrillas in Shantung; now he was in charge of the English broadcasts sent out by Morse from Yenan radio, his quick wits delighting in journalism as much as he delighted in the long night-marches, the ambushes and the intricacies of the war against the Japanese.

"I was everything at once—a school-teacher, and leader of a small group of guerrillas, and a doctor, and five or six other things. Nothing very important. You know, it's like fighting everywhere else—long periods of boredom and waiting, and then you would suddenly find that a Japanese column had been announced. We were badly equipped sometimes. We fought often with nine foot long spears—you get a great deal of pleasure sharpening the edges to a razor thinness. And there was no mercy for you if the Japanese got you—they killed you and got a great deal of fun in killing you.

"It has changed a lot since the time when Edgar Snow wrote *Red Star over China*. There was no tunnel warfare in those days, and we hadn't built up the technique we have now with land-mines. When the Japanese were bringing their blockhouses closer to us—the Chinese peasants were compelled to make the blockhouses with the stones from their own walls, so that there are places where the villages have been destroyed and in their place there are only the blockhouses—then sometimes we mined the land all round the blockhouses, and they could neither move in or out. We had rifles, hand-grenades, land-mines, spears and swords—this was about all. They had mountain artillery. They had cannon. They had their 'nibbling tactics'. The blockhouses were so close to one another

that the Japanese could see at least two blockhouses on either side of them. It was wasteful, but it was the only thing they could do to keep us in check.

"We had armed propaganda groups. This was about the most exciting thing we had—small bodies of youngsters with Mausers who would go out to make contact with the puppet forces, and if they got into difficulties, they would shoot their way out. But usually they did not get into difficulties. The puppet troops often only needed an excuse not to fight for the Japanese. It was the duty of the propaganda groups to find an excuse. They usually found it. The chief job of the puppet troops was to guard the railways. We left them to guard the railways, but we took away their arms.

"This wasn't the only thing they did. They mobilised the people's volunteers—the *Ming Ping*—for sudden attacks on blockhouses, and they kept up constant communication with the villagers. The Japanese would demand grain. The propaganda troops taught the peasants to sabotage the demands. The grain had to be kept from the Japanese wherever possible. But how? We would teach the peasants to bury it. This worked sometimes, but the Japanese began to take hostages and threaten to shoot them unless the hiding-place of the grain was revealed. We would wall up the grain within false walls. We would arrange with the village head to hold out as long as possible, and if the whole village was fined—well, we could pay the fine with captured Japanese money for them. We even taught the women and children to cry and beat themselves and pretend to be starving when the Japanese came in to demand the grain. We had to. For us, preventing the grain falling into Japanese hands was only second in importance to exterminating them.

"It was fun while it lasted. Sometimes it was hideous.

We were fighting on our own middens, and for our own lives—a decentralised warfare, and very personal. They were getting desperately frightened of us by 1942. We mined their lines of communication and dug man-high trenches along the sides of the main communications—you can still see traces of the trenches in Yenan, and sometimes the trenches were amazingly complex things. Trenches would disappear into tunnels. The trenches assumed all shapes—the Japanese could not fire along them. We broke up their roads. They 'nibbled', but we went underground, and it was worse than mechanised warfare because the hatred was prolonged and went deeper on both sides. We fought to the utmost with incredible patience; they fought with incredible despair.

"We had four kinds of troops. There was the People's Defence Corps, armed with spears and swords, who acted as sentries and spies in the villages. There were the People's Soldiers—*Ming Ping* means literally People's Soldiers—who had guns and hand-grenades and land-mines and were better trained. There were the armed guerrillas and the regular army, which comprised the Eighteenth Group Army (the old *Paluchun* or Eighth Route Army) and the New Fourth Army. Everyone was in the fighting line. It went on for a long time, but the kind of things I remember now are not the days of fighting—I remember walking slowly at night, and how sometimes we would suffer from night-blindness, and how quietly we walked. You had a lot of time to think, and chiefly you would think about the end of the war and getting married. There were soldiers who had not touched a woman for ten years. Discipline was strict. We did not dare to touch the village girls, because we wanted all the peasants on our side. Sometimes there were dances, but they did not often happen, and it was too exciting

altogether to take part in a dance with a girl when you had not seen one for months on end."

He would come to my room often, and once I went up the long path cut in the cliff-side to his cave in the editorial section of the newspaper. I have never seen a cave so bare. There was a book-case with less than ten books, there was a table, two stools and behind the book-case a bed. He said he was given no money, and would have no use for it even if it was given to him—everything was provided, food, paper, pencils, clothes. The food was good, but not plentiful. The leaders of the Government got the best food, he received the "medium mess" and the common soldiers and administrators were in the third category. I said it was not very communistic. He answered: "We have to do that. All the food is adequate—have you seen a single person looking pale or starved?—but we agreed long ago that the leaders should have the best. After all, it happens everywhere else, and the difference between the three categories is hardly noticeable." I asked what happened when he got married. If there was no money, how did you celebrate the marriage? He smiled wryly. "It's easy. The government will give you another plank to put in the bed, and there will be a hell of a good feast. The trouble is to find the girl." He looked contented, though he wanted a good book on journalism and as many books as possible about the modern world in English. In these high caves overlooking the valley there were long poles with sagging radio aerials; beneath them were small huts where monitors lived and listened on Japanese radios to the news coming from all the radio stations of the world. They had spot news, but they had little informed criticism, few books, only a few handfuls of magazines. This was in a very real sense the capital of a considerable number of millions of

Chinese, they were desperately cut off from the world, ingrown and curiously content to remain in their primitive simplicity. They were so accustomed to their caves, their wooden spinning-wheels—you saw the wooden spinning-wheels everywhere—and their vision of a democratic landlordless China that you wondered sometimes how they would behave in vast industrial cities. They had almost no experience of heavy industry outside Manchuria. "It's different in Kalgan," the guerrilla said. "That's a biggish city. In Yenan we're ingrown—that's true, but there they are getting down for the first time to the problems of industry on a large scale. They've got coal, iron, asbestos, mica. They've got a lot of machinery left by the Japanese." As we sat there in the cave, with the shadows playing against the wall, thick darkness outside, Kalgan looked eminently delightful and respectable. He wetted his lips. "Bathrooms with running water, electric light, streets which are paved—not just mud-traps like the Yenan roads in winter. You have a roof over your head, not a moist dripping cave to live in. And the food's better. Do you know what it is like when you have lived eight years, like some of the people here, in a village cut off from the world, and suddenly you go into a big city? I haven't been to a city for more years than I care to remember, but I know what it is like. When you see a comfortable chair with good springs, you hardly dare to sit in it. A tiled bathroom—hell, you'd get into the bath and stay in it all day and all night. We don't like this life, but it's worth living it. I want to get married and I don't want to live all my life in a cave."

He was severely critical of his own broadcasts, which were simple and factual, and not very exciting. They were not intended to be exciting. I read through hundreds of pages of them, typewritten on good paper—there is an

excellent paper-mill thirty miles from Yenan—and it was odd to notice how scrupulously all the modern headline techniques were avoided. They were grave, and innocent of all ornament. It was good, clear-cut journalism, but it was not the journalism that was going to make America or England excited. In Barcelona the broadcasting station had won its own victories. In the end I came to the conclusion that the Communists in China were nearly the worst propagandists in the world.

It was not their fault. They had neither the electric power, the technicians nor men trained in writing for the outside world. Mao Tse-tung had never been abroad. Chu Teh had studied in France and Germany, but it was long ago, and neither the French nor the Germans were of any use at this crisis. There was an incredible lack of knowledge of foreign psychology, and a very ready belief that this was one of their outstanding faults. In contrast to the Kuomintang, whose members were often returned students from America or England, the Communist leaders were nearly all returned students from France or Chinese who had never been abroad. They had good reason to be bitter against the Americans for sending troops northward in L.S.T.s, for offering military advice to the National Government against the Communists and for the continual lend-lease of materials which could be used to fight the civil war, but the editorials which appeared in the two Yenan newspapers had a bitterness which was purely Chinese and incomprehensible to the Americans or the British. Unfortunately for the Communists, these editorials were later translated by Embassy translators. They were circulated and sometimes reprinted. They were not necessarily factual, and they did nothing to heal raw wounds, and sometimes they gave the impression of a desperate vindictiveness which was

foreign to all the Communist leaders I met, who knew perfectly well that vindictiveness led nowhere. Yet both sides were committed to a war of nerves, played up the real and imaginary crimes of their opponents *ad nauseam* and declared that they alone possessed the true faith in their screaming editorials. In all this the English Morse-broadcasts were innocent, but I would have enjoyed reading them more if they were written with more fire and excitement. The guerrilla shook his head. "We're still learning. It's taken us a hell of a long time to get this far. And there's one thing worth remembering when you say we are ingrown—which is true—and this is that we have placed all our attention and put all our energies into educating the villages of China. Until they are educated, until every villager in China can read and write and realise his own strength in a democratic community, other things can wait. The important thing is that the villagers should be told what they are fighting for. We have no quarrel with the American people, but they are so far advanced industrially that they can learn nothing from us, and probably they can teach us very little; our problems are our own, and our isolation is a measure of our efforts to grapple with the problems of the villagers. We'll carry on like that. We're rotten propagandists to the outside world, but we're pretty good in China. We've given the peasants a new dignity and honesty, and—oh hell—there are four hundred million of them, more than the whole populations of America, Britain and Soviet Russia combined."

I confess I preferred it this way. It was honest, and it was independent; they were standing on their own feet, not begging for arms and lend-lease supplies. The Kuomintang was pinning its hopes on an industrial recovery which would owe a great deal to America. They

had every reason for this. The Communists were pinning their hopes on the farmers and peasants, and they had every reason for this. The tragedy lay in the fact that they so often thought themselves exclusive when they were mutually dependent on each other. American know-how, a rise in the standard of living of the peasants, the three principles of Dr. Sun Yat-sen and the new democracy of Mao Tse-tung—these were the essentials of the new China. China had everything to learn from Russia and everything to learn from America. Then why fight, and delay the process of learning and the rebuilding of the country? Why the violations of the truce on both sides? Why the L.S.T.s piled with American equipment and Chinese crack troops from Burma? Why the screaming and misleading editorials on both sides? Only a few weeks before *Ta Kung Pao* had stated: "The corpses starved to death strew the roads. People eat grass roots and tree-bark. Troops are sucking the blood of the villagers. . . . If ambitious persons insist on more adventures, we shall all perish." Yenan was not entirely guiltless, but you got the impression that she was considerably more conscious of a responsibility towards the peasants than the Kuomintang. Chu Teh had said: "Let bygones be bygones, and let's start afresh." The guerrilla had hope. He, too, wanted bygones to be bygones. I asked him how it would end. "It doesn't look as though it will ever end. There will be negotiations, and when the negotiations fail or even before the negotiations fail, there will be trials of strength. Neither side can defeat the other. There will be more negotiations and more trials of strength, and it may go on for ever and ruin the country completely. That's what I think sometimes. But more often I think it will all end suddenly—the nightmare will collapse—and we will go forward with the coalition government."

XI THE INVASIONS OF WESTERN SUMMER

THE vice-chairman of the Border Region Government was an old scholar and landlord, who wore his finger-nails long as all scholars did before the revolution of 1911, and who liked to talk of the past. He was nearly seventy, toothless, and he smoked a long ivory-stemmed pipe, which he would sometimes wave in the air to demonstrate some point or other which had occurred to him. He had a sharp crackling old voice, and was delighted to have an audience.

He had ridden all over northern Shensi during his long life, and knew every legend or story of the places he visited. He knew where there were temples, and he was pleased to think that the place where he had been born and brought up was one of the oldest places in the world. It is impossible to reproduce the voice, but as far as I can reproduce it, this is what he said:

"You've travelled a long way, and you've come to a pretty old place—the birthplace of China, probably. I don't mean Yenan so much, though Yenan was important once, but Shensi, and Shensi is so old that we don't know how old it is. The Yellow Emperor is buried not far from here, on the road to Sian. I'll tell you a story about it. I've seen the grave. It's a great mound covered with evergreens, and there's another mound facing it with an old temple. In the old days the grave and the temple were so famous that Emperors had to come there and worship, but during the later dynasties they simply sent princes to represent them. And after the Republic the Kuomintang sent some of their venerable members to make offerings at the tomb.

"Perhaps he's not buried there—I don't know. I know during the Ch'ing Dynasty one of the Emperors gave 700

taels of silver for the upkeep of the tomb, and I know that if he is not buried there, at least his crown and his clothes are buried there, because that is the old Chinese custom. No one ever dared excavate the tomb—it was far too sacred, but I remember at the end of the Ch'ing Dynasty there was a magistrate at Chung-po nearby who petitioned to the Empress Dowager, saying he wanted to build a bridge over the river and asking her for permission to cut down some of the evergreens to pay for the cost of the bridge.

"Well, the Empress-Dowager raised no objection and the magistrate cut down nearly all the trees and made a fortune out of them. After a time the people knew what had happened, and the people themselves sent a petition to the Empress-Dowager and the magistrate was called to Pekin. He was dismissed by the Empress from his office and all his property was confiscated. And then shortly afterwards he died, and then his wife died, and then all his children died one by one, and people realised there was a curse on anyone who touched anything near the grave of the Yellow Emperor.

"That's all I know about the grave of the Yellow Emperor except that in the court-yard of the temple facing the grave there's a tree thirty foot in girth, and they say that the Yellow Emperor once returned from battle and hung his armour on the tree. It may be true. It's the kind of tree you'd hang your armour on, if you only saw it."

He spoke of the Ming Dynasty frescoes in the temple at Tang-ling hill to the north, and of the curious fact that the two most famous beauties in China were born in the *hsien* of Mi-tzu less than 120 *li* away; there was a famous bell in Hu *hsien* less than 200 *li* away with an inscription which went back to the time of the Six Kingdoms, and

ninety *li* away to the south-east, at Nan-yi-wan, there was another cave of buddhas at the foot of a hill, where the statues were partly washed away by a stream. But most of all he liked talking about the history of the area round Yenan.

"In the old days Yenan was in the dukedom of Wei, but later it fell to the barbarians of the north who were known as the Wu Hu, or Five Barbarian Tribes, ruled over by Ho-le-pa-pa, who ordered that the people should build for him a great wall of steamed and hardened white earth to protect him from the Chinese. They said he would go round the wall himself and dig an iron rod into it to see whether it was hard, and if the iron rod penetrated the wall, then he would order the execution of the people who had made the wall.

"But we know little enough about the early barbarian tribes. In T'ang Dynasty times Yenan was known as Yenchow, and it was the time when the Hsi Hsia, or Western Summer barbarians, were attempting to invade the south. The reigning Chinese Emperor of the time tried to buy them off with gifts and honours. He gave all the Western Summer tribesmen the name of the imperial family, which was Li. During all that time Yenan was an important garrison town on the frontier.

"In Sung Dynasty times the Western Summer tribesmen were still there, and the reigning Emperor gave them the name of his imperial family, which was Tsao. So sometimes the Western Summer tribesmen called themselves Li, and they did this whenever they wanted to annoy the Emperor, and when they wanted to please the Emperor, they called themselves Tsao. But the battles went on. The Western Summer tribes were always trying to fight south, and the garrisons were always trying to beat them off—it was guerrilla warfare, and then as now all the mountains

had fortifications on them. On the Chinese side there were two famous generals who opposed the tribesmen; one was Huai Chung-yen and the other was Han Chi. Even now the people sing a song which describes the generals:

When China has a Han,
Then the Western Summers are happy:
When China has a Huai,
Then the Western tribesmen are broken-hearted.

Both these generals came from near Yenan. There were great battles, the Western Summer tribes were pushed back, Yenan increased in importance and was raised from the rank of a *chow* to a *fu*, and it was because of the success of the wars against the Western Summer that the Emperor of the Sung Dynasty advocated the treacherous policy of friendship with the Golden Horde and continual war with the Western Summer. By this time the Western Summer tribesmen were known as Liao. The wars went on, but far in the north the Golden Horde was preparing to attack southwards. They attacked. They made their capital in Kaifeng, and the Emperor was compelled to flee to Nanking. For more than a hundred years the Golden Horde held sway over North China, capturing our Emperors and preparing the way for their own defeat later.

"Their own defeat came in exactly the same way. Great tribes were moving beyond the Great Wall, and behind the Golden Horde there lay the Mongols, who took advantage of the weakness of the Sungs to invade the whole of China. So the Yuan Dynasty came into being. And so it has been always in China; when there is war in the north, we are always at the mercy of foreign invaders.

"This was the time when Yenan was most important. Since then, until 1935, it was only a forgotten corner of

China. During the Ming Dynasty the frontier passed through Yuling, and Yenan was of no importance at all. During the Ch'ing Dynasty matters grew worse. There was famine and drought here, the people rebelled and were mercilessly suppressed, and I suspect that they were suppressed at all times, for the land was always poor and the tax-collectors were always coming. The great days were in Sung times and at the present time, and certainly there must have been great days when it was part of the dukedom of Wei. The Western Summer barbarians came here, and we pushed them back, and I suppose we shall push a few more barbarians back before we have finished with our history."

XII FACES

ALL were sunburnt, for there is little shade in these valleys except in the caves and most men spent their lives in the fields. Mostly they were northern faces, deeply lined, with square foreheads and handsome features, but sometimes and more often than you expected you saw the aquiline features of descendants of the Turkic tribes that came down from the north; they were darker, and often the men were taller.

For years the valley of Yenan lay on the frontier. Tribesmen came down from the north and intermarried with the original stock, and from Sian in the south people fled northward. As in Vienna and Okinawa and in all those places where there have been mixtures of widely differing stocks, those who survive seem often the handsomest, and these people of Yenan were handsome and sturdy above the average. I never saw a girl who was not delightful to look

at. On old Chinese tapestries and paintings of the T'ang Dynasty you will come across girls and women with pear-shaped faces. I had thought this kind of beauty had vanished till I came here and saw a girl walking along a road, who resembled one of the pear-faced goddesses on the tapestries. They say there are hundreds of them in this region, but they seem to be growing rarer. They are called *gua-nien-tzu,* and may be descended from the court beauties who once decorated Sian, when it was known as Ch'ang-an, the capital of the Empire. I never saw a man with one of these faces, but I saw at least four girls. And one wonders how they can survive when there is so much foreign blood, and always new waves of people are coming to these valleys.

Once I saw a man riding furiously on horseback, and noticed that the horse was one of those heavy-cruppered horses which appear in T'ang Dynasty memorials, a descendant of one of the horses which a famous T'ang Emperor captured in Ferghana; as he rode through the dust, he resembled a prince, the face very red and heavily bearded, the saddle-cloth bright blue and embroidered with Persian roses, and he wore bright yellow sleeves and a red cape fell from his shoulders. When he had disappeared at last, you could have sworn it was someone you had seen in a dream.

Down from the hills come the peasants to their markets and co-operatives. They come in thin-wheeled carts, the wheels studded with brass, carts which are exactly the same as those you find modelled in clay in Han Dynasty tombs. These people are unusually well-built, and you wonder where you have seen them before. In Szechuan they are thinner and have tighter lips. In Kumming they have Burmese blood and higher cheek-bones. The Hunanese are more sombre, unless they smile. And then you remember

the old carvings of the Liang Dynasty, the princes in flowing robes, the ministrants and the priests, and you remember that Shensi was always the cradle of China and these men are survivors of the earliest beginnings.

XIII LANDSCAPE

THE heat was terrible. It was the kind of landscape that van Gogh would have liked to paint—the dust rose like flames. And yet life went on, a small peasant cart with immense wheels went down to the river, the few mat-shed shops were still open and people walked slowly down the street, kicking up bright yellow fans of dust.

That morning a Kuomintang airplane had flown high over Yenan. We went out to watch it, puzzled by its presence. What could it find? Only a baking hot valley with dust-clouds rolling. If they dropped bombs, it would only make a few more dust-clouds. There was nothing at all in Yenan except the river, which was growing shallower each day, a few ponies which shrank into the walls of the cliffs and a few peasants. Yet they kept on sending these aeroplanes, and it was always puzzling.

And sometimes the earth seemed dead, without life, with nothing growing, a lost country which no explorer would ever find. Chu Yuan wrote a story of the Peach-blossom Fountain. He described a country which he reached through a cleft in the mountain near a spring where peach-trees were growing; beyond the mountain he came upon a race of people with flaxen hair who had escaped from the empire in the Tsin Dynasty, and knew nothing of the coming of the Hans. They tended their

fields and wore their hair in loops, and they were content to live as they were. There were peach-trees in Yenan, and it was not impossible to believe that you had come into this undiscovered country. The people looked contented. There was millet and wheat enough for everyone, and a little rice. Men dug out of the friable soil a hard living. They ploughed the slopes, every mountain was crowned with its plain of ripening wheat, but they had not yet reclaimed the desert—dams, hydraulic power, electricity would make the earth fertile.

Partly it was the sun's fault. Though the air was clear and delightfully transparent, the sun scorched everything within sight, and you did not feel the full force of the sun till you went out into the fields. The caves were cool. The fields were furnaces during those midsummer days, and the hot whirling dust got under your eyelids and made the mouth sore. Glaringly, the sultry indigo-blue sky made havoc of the shimmering landscape, which sometimes seemed to melt as all things melt when seen through the fumes rising from boiling lead. There were days when the heat was like a million flaming spears: yet the evenings were cold. They said it was bitter in winter, and I could well believe it.

There was so little shade. All that remained after the bombing of the old city were the walls and the gates. At noonday men clustered under the wall's shade, or sat in the dark shadows of the gates, motionless, saying nothing, too hot even to move their legs when jeeps and lorries passed through. It was too hot even to fan yourself. The dust rose—when a car passed quickly it would lift a column of dust fifty feet high and half a mile long. There was nothing anyone could do about it except to bathe in the muddy river.

I have forgotten why we went down to the river that day,

but I remember the three boys sleeping on the shore. They had bathed and there were still bubbles of water on their skins. There was no shade, but they had spread out their clothes under them and put up sticks near their heads from which hung their immense farmer's straw hats. The hats protected their faces, but their bodies remained in the sun, and what was extraordinary was that their chests were burnt dark brown, but their thighs were white, and then again below the knees the brownness emerged. They were all about sixteen, but they slept soundlessly, in the heavy stupor of heat, not noticing our approach. They were farm-boys, and their arms and hands stretched out on the dust were burnt darker even than their chests. When I think of those heavy summer days, I think of the farm-boys in their heavy slumber, and how difficult it was sometimes to move when the sun was vertically above us. But in the early afternoon life flowed back again into these rich, desolate valleys.

XIV YOG

WHEN the Americans first came to Yenan in 1944, they had certain disadvantages. They had every intention of helping the Communists to open an effective front, they were determined to do everything in their power to put an end to the military differences between the Kuomintang and the Communists, but they were faced with what seemed at first a deliberate apathy on the part of the Communists. The Communists were helpful and polite, but in some things they were adamant: they would not reveal all their military secrets, and they were indifferent to any attempt to seal up the differences between the two parties.

Superficially, things went well. There was Colonel David Barrett—this meant something considerable, for he knew the character of the Chinese better than most Americans and he could talk with them in his curious Mandarin Chinese in a way which gave complete confidence. In Washington Colonel Yeaton looked for reports about Red China. Nothing was coming in. Something was wrong, but what was it? It was only when he came out many months later, when the war was coming to its conclusion, that they learned they had been employing as interpreters during the whole stay of the Yenan Observer Group agents of the Kuomintang Secret Service. And the Communists were not pleased by the thought of having official secret agents in their midst.

But the Yenan Observer Group stayed on. It established a meteorological station, medical supplies were rushed in, electric generators were set up, and they provided first-rate radio facilities for the first time in the history of Red China. Michael Lindsay, as radio adviser to the Eighth Route Army, had done his work as well as possible with inadequate equipment, but now there was a real radio station. There were also offices and photographic laboratories, and there was a large mess-hall and recreation room built in memory of a young American called Whittlesey, who was killed by the Japanese. It was rumoured that the Japanese had abandoned a village after a fight and left important documents behind. Whittesley was determined to get the documents. The Communists thought the exploit foolhardy, but consented to send a small team with the young American. Meanwhile the Japanese had returned, and when Whittlesey and his companions entered the village they were cut down. The defences of the Japanese were improved, and later when the Communists made an attempt to recover the bodies,

they too were mown down. It had been a nasty affair, with some minor recriminations on both sides, but it ended amicably with both sides respecting the heroism of the other. There was neither the time nor the need for recriminations at any time afterwards.

Over the large compound there floated in June the American flag, but of the large Observer Group, which at one time numbered over forty men, there remained only a single American major. He was the only official representative of a foreign power in Yenan, a Chinese-American, born in Hawaii. It was a lonely life. In the morning he raised the American flag, in the evening it was taken down, reports came by radio from Executive headquarters and these were taken by a Chinese interpreter, translated and sent across the river to General Yang Shank'un, the acting Chief of Staff in the Communist Government. And that—officially—was nearly all. Unofficially the American major did considerably more. He gave cinema shows which were attended by members of the Government and he was the most useful man imaginable when cars broke down. He was always fretting about the lack of mechanical sense of the men around him, and always and entirely at the service of anyone who wanted assistance. He had fought his way across the Pacific and after all the excitement he had come at last to the quiet lonely backwater which is the administrative capital of a hundred million Chinese.

He was proud of his job as the only official foreigner there. There were two Russians in Yenan, both doctors, and he was certain that they were no more than doctors. Journalists would come occasionally; sometimes they would stay with him and every ten days an aeroplane would come from Pekin with supplies. It was something like the life on a small Pacific island: you waited im-

patiently for the aeroplane to come with its reels of film, and there would be an opportunity to talk with the pilots, and perhaps they would bring some fresh fruit—there was hardly any fruit at all in Yenan. Yet he was perfectly self-contained; there was always something that could be done and he was enjoying himself quietly. "The best time is when I put up the American flag in the morning. That's good—I don't know why, but it's good." He was bronzed and well made, and he liked to sit out on the dusty porch in shorts and look across the valley, through the willow-trees, at the ripening mountains. He wanted to bring his wife to study at Yenching, and perhaps in the holidays she could live with him in Yenan. "I don't care how long I stay in Yenan as long as I can bring my wife here. The people are good and—hell—it's fine to be with them." He amused himself sometimes by wondering whether he would dare paint an emblem on the jeeps under his control—the emblem would be a bearded Bolshevik with hand-grenades and pistols bulging from his pocket. "But I don't know. The Americans would hate it, I suppose, and Mao Tse-tung would think I was trying to be funny." And sometimes he was galled because the Communists kept on sending the same purely formal military reports as ever; he wished there was something he could bite his teeth on.

YOG, the Yenan Observer Group remained. It was good that it should remain in such capable hands but you felt sad that the administrative capital of so great a part of China had only one permanent foreign resident. There was no Kuomintang representative, no British, no Indian. There were no consuls, no trade representatives. There was Chou En-lai in Nanking, there was General Yeh Chien-ying in the Executive Headquarters in Pekin; the representation of the Communists hardly went further than

this. The Communists in China were connected with the outer world officially only by an American major and the staffs of two or three generals in the south and the Morse tapper which broadcast for a quarter of an hour a day from Yenan.

It was not of course the whole truth of their representation. They possessed vast and invisible forces. They possessed well-trained, well-equipped and well-indoctrinated armies. When they spoke of democracy and put it into practice they possessed powerful allies in the west. They knew that if they waited long enough, made fewer and fewer mistakes and found the will of the people, not imposing their own will on the people, they would eventually win—not perhaps the power in China, but so great a measure of it that their best efforts and contributions to government would prevail. And it was the oddest thing in the world to discover that in Yenan there was only one American major.

XV THE SCHOOL IN THE CAVES

High up on the cliff walls there was all that remained of the Lu Hsun Academy, one of the most famous universities in all China, for the Lu Hsun Academy had marched on foot to Kalgan, a thirty days' journey. We went there on a baking day and just as we left the jeep before the academy gates, the jeep rolled over the cliff-bank and fell twenty feet into a pig-pen. The driver was thrown clear. He was dazed and frightened and confronted with twenty large black pigs which ran screaming in all directions in the pig-pen. The sun was startlingly bright and you saw the boy with oil smeared all over him, waving his hands,

while the pigs tried to leap at him. One pig was crushed under the wheel. A peasant came with a three-foot knife, searched for the vein in the neck and dug the knife in up to the hilt.

It was not the perfect beginning to a visit to the University. We were all shaken and a little dazed. Most of Lu Hsun Academy, known as Lu-I, had gone, but part of Yenan University, known as Yenta, remained. The classrooms and dormitories were in caves, the professors lived in caves and the libraries were placed in the best caves of all. There remained in its entirety only the college of administration, and most of the books they had ever had.

Previously the college possessed an extraordinary importance as the only large centre of learning in the Communist areas. Like all the other Chinese Universities, it had suffered atrociously during the war years. Everything was inadequate—books, scientific instruments, even paper. They made crude glass test-tubes in the factory, they hammered out scientific equipment in the local arsenal. But there was a time when Lu-I had been the advance-guard of most of the educational work in the north. The innovations in the *yangko* dance were developed there. Drama had been given special importance, and it was among these caves that the best of the new dramas were written. Best of all these dramas was *The White-haired Lady* which told of the daughter of a tenant-farmer who failed to pay his rent. The landlord took the daughter as his concubine, the farmer died and at last the landlord drove her away. She hid in the mountains, going out only at night to find food in the temples, and gradually, because she never lived in the sunlight, her hair turned white. All over the district there were legends of a white-haired lady whom no one had seen. For twenty years she remained there, until the Red Army came into the neighbourhood,

and then she returned. It was not unlike the University I was to see later in Kalgan. The students were well-fed, they wore the same blue cotton clothes as the peasants and their work in the University was deliberately directed towards the final aim of keeping the students afterwards in the closest possible contact with the peasants. The courses were short-term courses—accounting lasted one year, law one and a half years, education two years. Yet you derived the impression that even under these restricted time-limits they had done well. The students were husky. The professors were often professors who had escaped from Kuomintang areas.

The fortunes of the war had brought a strange collection of English books to the library. There was John Buchan's *The Three Hostages* and *Mr. Standfast,* R. W. Seton-Watson's *Munich and the Dictators,* a collected edition of Walt Whitman, four Bibles, H. G. Wells's *The Shape of Things to Come,* the poems of Virgil, Liddell Hart's *The War in Outline,* Madame Chiang's *Messages on War and Peace,* twenty Penguin Shakespeares and William Faulkner's *Absalom Absalom.* On political science I could see only two books by Lenin, Gide's *Political Economy* and Bernard Shaw's *Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism.* There were about seventy books in English altogether, and you wondered where the devil they had come from.

The professors received no salary, but were given everything in kind—even to the carton of cigarettes which arrived on their tables on the first of each month. I went into some of the caves where the professors lived: they were as comfortable as anyone else in Yenan, the caves whitewashed and gleaming, the furniture solid and well-varnished. There was an orchestra, a small clinic, a cloth-store where the clothes of the students and the professors were supplied. I asked them whether they preferred to live

without salaries. One of the professors answered: "It saves a lot of time if you get all the services free—almost no shopping is needed." I did not see one person who did not look vigorously healthy.

"The best days are over," the president of the University told me. "Once we had all the best professors and the best students. What is left is only a quarter of what there was. If you had come here a year ago, you would have seen the yellow cliffs blue with students, but look at it now." But when you looked up the cliffs, they were still blue with students, and I suppose they will remain there until Yenan once more becomes a forgotten village in northern Shensi.

XVI YELLOW RIVER CANTATA

THEY would speak about him endlessly, as one of the great geniuses produced in war and who owed all the strength of his genius to the people. His name was Hsu Hsin-hai. He was a Cantonese, and he was not more than forty when he died—it is the fate of nearly all Chinese musicians to die young, before they have produced a quarter of what they might have accomplished. He was a tall man, with a face brown like a nut, and beautiful long hands which played at least twenty instruments. He wrote *The Yellow River Cantata,* which has now been played all over North China, the first piece of serious music employing western instruments to be written by a Chinese.

It was a song dedicated to the Yellow River, and the people who live on her; there was no sadness in the song. The song calls on the men to stem the tide of the river, and to use her, so that they themselves shall flourish; and

as you listen to the young voices passionately evoking the strength of the river, and of their land, you are caught up in a vast wave of hope for the future, so earnestly and with such challenging precision do they sing. "I wrote *The Yellow River Cantata* in order to describe the spirit of the old world," wrote the composer, "and at the same time I wanted to convey the spirit of the new. The Yellow River is the source of the five thousand years of Chinese history, and so this river reveals to us the struggle and creation of all these years. We sing this song, as we sing to eternity and freedom." It was inevitable that he should have written the cantata: what was extraordinary was that it should have been possible to write it in Yenan, where there were almost no musical instruments and where almost no students were capable of performing the music. He had to begin almost from the beginning, training his singers and accompanists until they could perform the work which he wrote shortly after his arrival in Yenan in 1938, at the height of the blockade.

They said he was a man who worked with infinite method, making out of old sugar-boxes and catgut the violins which produced at least half the fervour of his cantata, where the strings predominate even above the voices. No musician ever worked with greater difficulty, or with greater ease—for he was highly respected, everything he needed was given to him, his students were his slaves. He did not impress you by his appearance until he mounted the conductor's stand. Then they said—they were Chinese, and they sometimes expressed themselves in this way—it was as though flames sprang from his baton, and he could conjure out of the air the centuries of the Yellow River and the people who had lived on her. He was composing his hymn in the old cradle of Chinese civilisation. Though he was suffering from tuberculosis,

and lived in a damp cave in the mountains, they said he always seemed perfectly content—for the first time in his life he had the students he wanted, enough food to eat and the respect he craved for.

He had lived a hard life. So have a hundred other musicians in China, even the best. There was Nieh Erh, who died of tuberculosis in Japan, after composing *The March of the Volunteers,* a song which is sung by soldiers all over China: probably in the whole world no other song has been sung so often. There was Liu Chi, who wrote a cantata on *The Defence of Madrid,* for there was a time when Yenan and Madrid were close together—he too died young. There was Chiang Hsu and Kuang Shih—all were good, and all died. Hsu Hsin-hai survived longer than most, composed countless songs and two long cantatas, then in 1940 he left Yenan and four years later died of tuberculosis of the lungs at a Moscow hospital.

It is easy enough to understand why he died. His contemporary, Sitson Ma, who knew him in Paris, wrote after his death: "It must have been either in 1928 or 1929 that I met him for the first time—a Cantonese dressed in a ragged coat walking down the *rue de Madrid.* I was coming out of the Paris Institute of Music when I recognised him—it was Hsu Hsin-hai, who had worked on a steamer as a coolie to obtain passage to France. We talked and talked as we walked down the road, and at last we arrived at a shop with a glass-paned door, and there we stopped. Hot vapours steamed through the door. It was a house for baths and manicures. He was the waiter there. . . . The next morning he took me to his attic in a nine-storeyed house. The small room was about the height of a grown man, with a desk close to the bed. Above the desk there was an opening, a bull's eye, a glass window with its face to the sky. When Hsu Hsin-hai practised

the violin, he stood on the desk with the upper part of his body stretching outside the window towards the sky, playing his music to God."

He was twenty-five at the time. In 1935 he returned to China and composed his hymns to the people. He was working in Hankow during the early stages of the war against the Japanese, and there he wrote songs for the soldiers. *The Song of Midnight, The March of Youth, The Song of the Three Thousand Wanderers*—the titles were symptomatic of the times. He went to the front as a political speaker for the Kuomintang, and then something happened and he said that the war was being lost from Chungking, and he made his way secretly to the north.

I attended a performance of *The Yellow River Cantata* in Yenan. It was played with extraordinary skill, but it was not in any sense a professional performance. The voices were lusty, and the singers abandoned themselves completely to the music, but they were not always singing in time. And perhaps it was better that way. You felt the urgency of these youngsters, and it was not difficult, seeing those red faces under the glare of the arc-lamps on the stage, to conjure up the emotions which possessed Hu Hsin-hai when he composed the song. There, before you, yellow, immense, feeding the country and at the same time ravaging the country, overwhelming with its portents of suffering and fertility, lay the river.

XVII THE DEAD

You do not see any signs of the dead in Yenan. In all other Chinese towns you see the grave-mounds rising

north and east of the city, and sometimes on all sides, and there the dogs play and scabble among the grasses, and the rooks come, and in the old burial pits for a reason I have never been able to discover they put dead horses. The burial places are also the execution grounds, and since sometimes you must wander on the outskirts of the city to see your friends, or to go to neighbouring villages, you are always in danger of seeing a man with his arms tied behind his back, kneeling, and by his side a rough pinewood plank coffin. But in Yenan there are no grave-mounds, and no dead.

It was strange at first, for you are so accustomed to these mounds that their absence becomes striking. In other Chinese towns the dead are the besiegers of the living, waiting outside the walls. Perhaps, one wondered, people did not die in northern Shensi. The children in their white caps and blue trousers looked ridiculously healthy; the old men looked as though they would live for ever. There were an incredible number of monuments to past emperors, inscriptions on rock, but there were no dead.

In these soft, friable loess valleys all the earth must be ploughed. There is no room for the dead. And if the dead are invisible, so are the people invisible: there are days when you can walk in the outskirts of Yenan and see almost no one at all—in the heat they are all hidden in the caves. You would see a man working high above you on the mountain, or perhaps a cart would lumber by, but the driver was hidden in the bales of hay. All round Yenan, on those clear hot summer days, there was a curious emptiness. Nothing stirred. No one came out of the military headquarters, and you forgot that inside the mountains men were sitting in shirt-sleeves over telephones, taking down radioed statements from all the stations in the world, giving orders, even in this heat

making plans for the future of China. Something of the future was there, hidden in the dark caves.

But the dead were there, and so were the people. You noticed at intervals, at the foot of the mountains, under jutting ledges of rock, in the most barren and uncultivated places, small lead-coloured and pointed plinths. Sometimes they carried a red star, more often they carried nothing except the name of a dead peasant. "Where are the dead?" I asked once. "We forget them," a young soldier answered. "There is no room for them here."

XVIII CHIEF-OF-STAFF

He was a young Szechuanese, hardly more than thirty, who lived just outside the Army Headquarters, in three tunnels scooped out of a small hillside. He was nearly always bursting with tremendous fits of laughter, and he was often amused by the world which seemed to be full of delightful imbecilities. General Yeh Chien-ying, the former Chief-of-Staff, had gone to Pekin as head of the Communist delegation at the Executive Headquarters; in his place was the Szechuanese, Yang Shan-k'un, who insisted that the rank of acting Chief-of-Staff did not entitle him to be called "general". He wore the usual blue faded cotton cloth, the usual coarse wheat-straw sandals, and I never saw him without his usual grin. There were three things he appeared to like above all others—Mao Tse-tung, his wife and American cigarettes. American cigarettes were his only vice, and he consumed them in monstrous proportions.

I saw him many times, and one afternoon, while his

children were playing in the court-yard, he told me as much as he could remember of the Sian Incident, which had taken place nearly ten years before. The Sian Incident, however, is not yet out of date. It is important because it introduced radical changes in the programme of the Chinese Communist Party, and because it set the tempo for many things that happened later. Yang Shan-k'un was there at the time, and though he was not then a member of the Central Executive Committee, he was well-informed about everything that had happened.

"The Communists had only been in Yenan for just over a year when the Sian Incident took place," he said. "It was a time of extraordinary stress and strain, we were fighting continual guerrilla wars against Kuomintang troops and the Japanese were known to be about to attack. Then suddenly we heard that Chang Hsueh-liang, the Young Marshal, had captured the Generalissimo. Chang Hsueh-ling took the responsibility for the capture from the beginning, and he *was* the responsible man. At first we heard nothing in Yenan. We were as mystified as everyone else. Some days later we sent a commission of three men at Chang Hsueh-liang's invitation to Sian. These were Chou En-lai, Yeh Chien-ying and one other. In view of the urgency of the times, they were given wide powers, but the Central Executive Committee was to make the final decisions.

"Chou En-lai had many conversations with the Generalissimo. The Generalissimo does not mention them in his book *Fortnight in Sian*, but he does mention in the Chinese edition that at one point he met 'a man he hated'. This was General Chou En-lai. He had the hardest of all tasks, for Chang Hsueh-liang had decided before the capture that it was necessary to kill the Generalissimo, and the Central Executive Committee was determined that he

should be kept alive. It was not altruism. We were faced with two alternatives—the Generalissimo or General Ho Ying-chin. Ho Ying-chin had signed the infamous Ho-Umezu agreement, and we regarded him—we had documentary evidence—as pro-Japanese and prepared to surrender to the Japanese. On the other hand we were beginning to learn that the Generalissimo was determined on fighting the Japanese, and if he was killed, power would fall immediately into General Ho's hands. So the Central Executive Committee insisted that the Generalissimo be kept alive. The decision was made here in Yenan. It was unanimous—or rather there was one dissenting vote by Chang Kuo-tao, who later went over to the Kuomintang side! It is odd that the Generalissimo should want to kill us when we have done so much to save his life.

"It was a time when the most extraordinary things were happening. The Tung-pei (North-East) and Hsi-pei (North-West) armies possessed few, if any Communists in them. It is not true that they were honeycombed with Communists. But what was clear was that they were preparing under the leadership of Chang Hsueh-liang to take independent action—action independent of the Central Government. On November 21st Fu Tsung-nan's army had been defeated by the Reds. It began to look extremely likely that the Generalissimo wanted the armies of Chang Hsueh-liang to be destroyed by us, too. It was more than likely that the real cause why he came up to Sian was not to destroy us, but in the hope that we would destroy the armies of Chang Hsueh-liang, and be left too weak to fight against him for some while. If this was his plan, and we have very good evidence for it, it was remarkably short-sighted; for if we were destroyed, the Japanese would have taken the opportunity to sweep through Shensi and Shansi.

"At these meetings in Sian when the fate of the Generalissimo was being decided, a great change of policy was made. We decided not to attempt to annihilate the Kuomintang. We realised that the immediate danger was the invasion of the Japanese, and we could not afford one ounce of energy in fighting the Kuomintang."

XIX THE CAVE OF THE TEN THOUSAND BUDDHAS

THE waves of honey-coloured suffocating sand came rolling along the road, but inside the printing shops everything was cool. The printing-presses were high up on the cliff-face and you reached them through an ornamented green-tiled gateway. Cut out of the cliffs were inscriptions in praise of Buddha, and near the gateway there was a small wooden board on which was written: *Liberation Daily*. An old temple had become the headquarters of the most important Communist daily in China.

In Pekin, Shanghai and Nanking all Communist newspapers were banned. No newspaper was allowed to print news from Communist sources; in the whole country there were only seven Communist newspapers, and these were produced in the Border Areas. These were the newspapers for general circulation, but every army possessed its own printing press and hundreds of magazines were in circulation. Of all these newspapers the *Liberation Daily* was probably the most influential.

I had not expected to find modern machinery high up in these caves, but least of all had I expected to find caves like these. They were not cut from loess: they were cut

from rock, and from every wall there were buddhas gazing down at you. There were the small black printing-presses, some powered by treadle, others by steam, roaring and hammering and clicking, and beside them were the great guardian gods, life-size, with the paint still on them. And in another cave, twenty times vaster, made in the shape of a great square and stacked with ream upon ream of brown paper, were ten thousand buddhas.

It was curious and enchanting, and among them were some of the best buddhas I have ever seen. There were row upon row of small buddhas reaching from the floor to the ceiling, and here and there you saw a much larger buddha of the T'ang Dynasty, almost feminine in its elegance of expression and gesture, reclining or blessing, untouched and unharmed by the centuries. In spite of the reams of paper, it was easy enough to imagine you were in the temple. On some of the buddhas faint colours remained—malachite green, and red and blue. It was annoying to remember that at the greatest period of T'ang Dynasty art the buddhas were all painted, but how well they had survived! The paint had flaked off, but the unchanging stone remained. Mostly, there were the rows of small buddhas, but there were at least eight of these larger carvings, and there may have been more among the stacks of paper, hidden in corners. The printing-presses were the new prayer-wheels, and the new priests were these boys in fading blue cloth who ministered to them.

I have seen in revolutionary Spain a lovely fifteenth-century chapel made into a motor repair-shop, the altar littered with the rusted red entrails of engines. I had hated it at first, until at last, remembering that there was no other house standing in this village near the Ebro, it had seemed less desecration than the accomplish-

ment of a good purpose: a Red Cross flag flew over the church, and this was a repair shop for ambulances. And here too the change seemed necessary and inevitable. The old city had been bombed to rubble. There was no other place where paper could be stored. And the buddhas did not care and were carefully preserved.

Among them was at least one which would have melted the mouths of the curators of the world's museums. Buddha lay in a half reclining posture, fingering his stone necklace with one hand and blessing the world with the other. The nose had broken off, but you could still see the chaplet of flowers in the head-dress and the faint Grecian folds of the gown. There were no lights in this store-room except oil-lamps, and when it grew dark, the stone glowed. And perhaps nothing had changed through the centuries, for the first people in the world to use paper were buddhist priests, as Aurel Stein discovered in the Gobi, and more than a thousand years before the Communists came here, there may have been stacks of paper and printing-presses in caves nearby.

It was oddly disturbing to find the buddhas there. I had never seen these carvings in their original sites before. The square temple, with its huge stone altar and smoke-blackened ceiling, the tens of thousands of buddhas lining the walls, enforcing by their sheer repetition a sense of disturbing calm, all these were unexpected in Yenan, and more than ever unexpected in the printing-press.

XX MAO TSE-TUNG

PHOTOGRAPHS are unfaithful and give no impression of the man with the long streaming blue-black hair, the

round silver-rimmed spectacles, the fine cheek-bones, the pursed, almost feminine lips and the air of a college professor. Usually, you see him in photographs wearing a cloth cap, and you notice the round peasant face and the small nose and the heavy eyes—but the moment the cap is taken off the peasant disappears. It is true that he hardly ever remains the same for more than a few minutes on end, so that one moment he giggles like a boy, and the next moment the soft voice takes on depth and authority and a quite extraordinary resonance. He is fifty-three and looks thirty. You will see him any day on any campus in England or America.

Partly, of course, it is the fault of the legend. If you remember the Long March, if you remember Edgar Snow's famous story of Mao Tse-tung undoing his trousers and scrabbling for fleas, or taking off his trousers altogether when he entered Lin Piao's cave one sweltering hot day and gazing at a map on the wall, then you will be perfectly satisfied to regard him as part military genius, part peasant leader and part barbarian. Edgar Snow wrote *Red Star over China* nearly ten years ago. Mao has matured and taken on a deeper gravity of manner, but he was obviously never the barbarian. Agnes Smedley describes how she was shocked by his feminity. It is perfectly true that there is a streak of feminity in him, as there is in all Chinese scholars to the extent that their gestures are graceful, they speak in carefully modulated soft voices and sing their poems falsetto. There is something of the same feminity in Chu Teh, whose voice has a tenderness which would resemble weakness in any western general, though no general has been tougher than Chu Teh. Ultimately, a man is what he is without his cap. Remove the cap, and Mao Tse-tung gives all the appearance of a scholar, with all the odd chameleon strengths and weaknesses

which come from an intense absorption in scholarship. The course of study he has set himself is the revolution of China.

I watched him carefully for more than three hours in a bare room which was the Yenan equivalent to the Foreign Office drawing-room. He was not at first sight impressive. No flashes of electric energy radiated from him, and for a little while I was not even conscious of his presence. He wore black cotton slippers and a brown woollen Sun Yat-sen uniform. When he shook hands, he lifted his elbow to the height of his shoulder, an odd gesture, which suggested that his hands had been mauled before by foreigners. Yet he did not in the least give the impression of weakness. He had burly shoulders, and his hands were large, like peasant hands. He smiled delightfully, and when he spoke the voice was very low and almost inaudible. He had a high forehead, and his face was bronzed.

It was a party given for three professors who had come down from Pekin; among them there was an old man who had been his teacher many years before. There was Mao Tse-tung, Chu Teh, the American major, the three professors, an interpreter and myself. Mao was very much the host, and though the professors wanted to talk about him, he insisted on talking about Chu Teh. "It was extraordinary. Chu Teh had the courage to go through the grasslands *twice*. It was pretty dangerous to go through it once, but twice——" The legend of the Long March returned; he had no desire to side-track it, and answered the professors' questions gravely. They wanted the whole history of the Long March. The Communists were old men now. The Long March was still the legend around which their lives revolved; they were absorbed by their recollections of those long journeys as others are absorbed

by their memories of their youth. He spoke of the grasslands again. "We killed our oxen and horses for meat, and carried them on our few remaining baggage animals, and then in the end we ate the baggage animals and carried the meat ourselves. It was desperately hard, and the best fighters we ever had to face were the aboriginal tribes—the Miaos, the Fans, the Mis and the Huans. We learnt from them more than we learnt from anyone else." And then again, a little later: "We have to thank the Generalissimo for driving us into all those strange places—we would never have seen them if it had not been for the Generalissimo." He laughed. Someone asked him how they had managed to come through unharmed. He answered: "The vast territories of China and the backwardness of everything." He said later: "There are territories near Sikong where there are so few fishermen that the fish just aren't afraid of people." It was a rambling and desultory dinner-table conversation. The electric light came from the power-plant belonging to the American Observer Group on the other side of the river. It was late tonight. When it came on, it was already deep dusk; and when the light burst over our heads, he giggled again. He looked self-conscious only when the American major began to photograph him with a flash-bulb holder poised in his hand. He ate slowly and carefully, and he would look up for no reason and smile at someone for no reason at all. He was still the college professor. You expected there would be coffee and liqueurs, and perhaps the college servant would come in in a moment with brandy on a silver salver. Then the party came to an end, he accompanied his guests to the door, bowed, and shortly afterwards disappeared to accompany them a little farther down the road.

He had said he would return and talk to me, and I

waited alone in the bare room with its portraits of Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek, Truman, Stalin and Attlee on the wall. It was so odd to find the portrait of Chiang Kai-shek, and odder still to notice in the corner portraits of Mao Tse-tung and Chu Teh. You saw these portraits occasionally in the government offices, and sometimes in shops and peasant homes, and you wondered why they were there. The interpreter said they had great difficulty finding a portrait of Attlee—no one knew what he looked like, and hardly anyone had heard much about him—but at last they had found one in *Life* and enlarged it. Mao Tse-tung came back. He sat on a stool and put another stool between us; the dinner-things were being cleared away, he was no longer the genial host but a man prepared to talk about the civil war, socialism, China, the heavy things that lay on his mind. He looked grim now. The line of the mouth became hard and determined, the voice deeper, the gestures far more restrained. But I hadn't come to talk about politics—I wanted to find more of his poems and translate them. He laughed again. "They're really very bad—terribly bad. I just write poetry to waste time."

It was useless. Whatever you said about his poetry, he had one final, absolute answer—it was shockingly bad, and he would be ashamed to have it seen. It was nonsense, but the kind of nonsense that gave him pleasure, for he giggled again, knowing only too well that the poetry was good. He had written a poem called *The Snow* which had become famous all over China. "I gave it to my friend, urging him not to let anyone see it, but he published it without my permission."

Then the hardness returned, the romantic disappeared and in its place was the cool brain which wrote *New Democracy* and *The Coalition Government*. They are

hard-hammering, with few literary graces, books written in ice-cold composure and with a formidable logic. Calmly, logically, he spoke about the civil war, and there was nothing at all original in what he said, but in the manner of it there was a hidden strength and a quiet purpose. I had said something or other about the failure of the Spanish Republicans during the civil war against the massed artillery of the Germans. He said: "In the first place, Spain is not China. There were only 8,000,000 people fighting against Franco, but the Chinese liberated area numbers a population of 130,000,000. The Spanish Republic fought for three years. We have fought for twenty-one years. But from the very beginning up to now, we have desired peace and we do not want this war to be prolonged."

He went on: "There are some people abroad who are helping the Kuomintang to fight with their offer of ammunition. These supplies should be stopped, and the democratic peoples of other countries should oppose the sending of ammunition to the Kuomintang. There are people abroad who do not want or approve of democracy in this country: these people are acting with the consonance of the reactionaries in China. Let them know that whatever happens, if we are faced with mechanised war, we shall fight on, if necessary with our hands and feet."

I asked him what were the conditions for peace in the civil war. He said: "When there is democracy, the civil war will end. The people who are fighting really do not want to realise democracy at all."

He was dubious—or had not read enough—about socialism in England. He thought the socialist government's policy of taking over the heavy industries was partly dictated by the necessity of an export trade. He was glad there were no British soldiers in China, but said

that British intervention in Indonesia was "not correct". He liked the phrase "not correct" and used it often. He said: "There are some people abroad who hope to extend the civil war in China—they are doing everything they can to extend the war. But on our side we do not want war, and we look forward to the time when all democratic elements in all countries are united towards the common aim of peace. It is as simple as that." And then again: "We are not afraid of being defeated for we shall not be defeated," and then made a gesture with his hands and feet to explain that they would fight with their hands and feet to the last man. It was the second time he had done this. He talked for a little while about the aims of his small government, saying as Chu Teh had said before that in the civil war neither side could win, it was better to have a coalition government and that China could not afford a civil war either now or at any other time. The voice grew deeper, the scholarly graces vanished, and you noticed for the first time the inflexible temper which lay behind the air of refined scholarship. Like Chu Teh, he was unimpressive at first sight and possessed no tricks of expression at all. But gradually he showed his quiet power. It was then, and only then, that the peasant, the scholar, the politician and the military commander seemed to be fused together. A few moments later he left and walked up to his house. All you saw in the darkness were the stooped shoulders coloured with the blood-red light from a lamp which a soldier held as he walked behind him.

Mao Tse-tung is a complex figure, but it is becoming increasingly necessary that the world should understand him. No other political leader living, and very few in the past, have his formidable reputation for scholarship and for poetry. It is known that he has made a selection of his poems, which has probably been published—information

about his poetry is hard to come by, but the selection called *Feng Chien Tze* certainly exists. *Feng Chien Tze* means "wind sand poems", and is probably meant to refer to their fleeting, turbulent character. But the collection, if printed at all, is printed privately. No copies were available in Yenan, and Mao said himself that he wanted his poems to be known neither in China nor abroad, he was annoyed that some had been published and he frowned on all poetry in the old classical tradition, though he wrote it.

I give here the only three poems of his I was able to find. The first and second were written during the Long March and the third was written either just before he went to Chungking in 1945 or shortly afterwards.

I

The sky is high, the clouds are winnowing,
I gaze southwards at the wild geese disappearing over the horizon.
I count on my fingers—a distance of 20,000 li
I say we are not heroes if we do not reach the Great Wall.

Standing on the highest peak of Six Mountains,
The red flag streaming in the west wind,
Today with a long rope in my hand,
I wonder how soon before we can bind up the monster.

II

None in the Red Army feared the distresses of the Long March.
We looked lightly on the thousand peaks and the ten thousand rivers,

The Five Mountains rose and fell like rippling waves,
The Wuliang mountains were no more than small green pebbles.
Warm were the sheer precipices when Gold Sand river dashed into them,
Cold were the iron-chained bridges over the Tatu river.
Delighting in the thousand snowy folds of the Min Mountain,
The last pass vanquished, the Three Armies smiled.

III

The Snow

All the scenery of the North
Is enclosed in a thousand li *of ice*
And ten thousand li *of whirling snow.*
Behold both sides of the Great Wall——
There is only a vast confusion left.
On the upper and lower reaches of the Yellow River
You can no longer see the flowing water.
The mountains are dancing silver serpents,
The hills on the plains are shining elephants.
I desire to compare my height with the skies.

In clear weather
The earth is so charming,
Like a red-faced girl clothed in white.
Such is the charm of these rivers and mountains,
Calling innumerable heroes to vie with each other in pursuing her.

The Emperors Shih Huang and Wu Ti were barely cultured,
The Emperors Tai Tsung and Tai Tsu were lacking in feeling,
Ghenghiz Khan knew only how to bend his bow at the eagles.
These all belong to the past—only today are there men of feeling.

The poems are difficult to translate. In the Chinese, for example, "I desire to compare my height with the skies" possesses a note of grandeur, but not of personal grandeur —he is speaking of an aeroplane. The "Three Armies" do not refer to the *four* armies which took part in the Long March, but refer to a technical term, as ancient as the Chou Dynasty, to describe the armies of the Emperor, which he identifies with the Red Army. "The Red Army" itself possesses immense emotional force in Chinese, because one is conscious at first only of their colour, which suggests to a Chinese reader on reading it for the first time, youth and virility. The last poem when published in *Ta Kung Pao* was hailed as a masterly summary of all Chinese history, all landscapes in China—in the shortest number of words he had produced the most complete picture of the Chinese scene. Nearly all the poems he has written, I was told, have a kind of dagger-thrust in the last line. So it is here. The poet builds up slowly the vivid portrait he desires to convey, and crowns it in the last line of all, and this method is something altogether new in Chinese poetry, which knows no climaxes comparable with these.

This is all we could find, but somehow it was satisfying; the pattern remained, and though there were probably many other patterns, it would be difficult to imagine that the essence of the man's poetry changed. You know more

about a man when you have read some of his poetry, but you know less when you have read too much of it. He said of his poetry that it was a private game, it was all *ma-ma-hu-hu*—a delightful word meaning anything you care to imagine between "idiotic" and "useless". It was not idiotic or useless, and it was horrible to think the poetry might never be published when it introduced something so new and so long desired. He did not want them published. His calligraphy was magnificently bold and sweeping, his best prose was finer than most. And it was sad to reflect that some of the best poetry now being written in China might well remain in manuscript.

XXI DOCTOR MA

His real name was Dr. George Hatem, but he was known in Yenan as Dr. Ma Hei-teh. He was an American with fine dark hands and heavy eyelids, and you felt immediately that he would do everything in his power to heal the sick. Years ago, returning from Switzerland, where he graduated, to America, he stayed for a while in Shanghai with the intention of studying tropical medicine. And then someone told him about the Communist experiment in Shensi. He was not a Communist. He made his way up through Hongkong and Sian at the time when Edgar Snow was first visiting the Communist areas; and he has stayed on ever since.

He was proud of his hospital which lay on the road to Chu Teh's date garden. He had seen it in the days when Yenan was cut off from the world and entirely forgotten, when everything had to be improvised—drugs, stretchers,

surgical instruments, even bandages. There was no X-ray machine in those days. You used cotton gauze boiled in local lye to get the fats out, you made Mayo tables of wooden packing-cases, and you made catgut from local sheep intestines and you tried to make adhesive tape—it was one of the most difficult problems, and never solved satisfactorily—with cotton bandages dipped in tree-sap. Surgical instruments were made in the local arsenal; they looked homespun, and they did not glitter like surgical instruments in well-equipped hospitals, but they were adequate. It wasn't a perfect hospital. The patients were kept in caves on different levels along the cliffs, it was a hard job climbing the cliffs, especially in autumn when the lanes would be ankle-deep in mud, you couldn't control flies and there was far too much dirt. But they had done their best with their home-made steam sterilisers, their home-made drugs and precipitation tests and charts and glass test-tubes, which shone a murky green colour, because they were made in Yenan. There was a time when they only had one microscope, and the hand centrifuge made in the arsenal was hopelessly inadequate for their needs. But they had learned a lot, and above all they had learned how to improvise. Because medicines were withheld by the blockade, many people had died and many would have been healed sooner; but on the whole they had done their best, and they were almost content with what they had done. "We got a tremendous satisfaction out of working with nothing," he said. "I've been to Pekin. There's a doctor there, trained in the Pekin Union Medical College, who won't operate for less than a million dollars." The Chinese doctor who was accompanying us said: "Okay, I've earned ten million dollars today."

It was getting better now. The American Red Cross had sent in 1944 a fine X-ray machine and a great deal of

gleaming surgical apparatus, which made the home-made instruments look inconceivably tawdry in comparison. They had done everything imaginable to break the blockade, and at last they had succeeded. It was no longer an important hospital. There were far bigger hospitals in Manchuria and Chahar under Communist administration, but the cave-wards were filled, internes were still being trained and there was a still a great deal of work to do.

"It was a difficult time, but we enjoyed it," said Dr. Hatem. "We were faced with the task of building up a scientific tradition in a province which is 4,000 years old. There were witch-doctors with close-fitting black clothes, four-bladed swords and a host of incantations; there were herb-doctors and acutipuncturists; there were midwives who did not know the rudiments of human physiology. This is what we were faced with when we first came here.

"The witch-doctors we banned. They were dangerous. We got rid of them by introducing them in *yangko* plays, so that the people laughed at them, and we got them better jobs—gave them farms—anything as long as they would stop harming the people. The herb-doctors, the acutipuncturists and the midwives we kept, but we gave them training in the essentials of western medicine. Chinese herb-doctors have done an enormous lot of good. They have medicines against malaria, and they can cure intestinal, abdominal and muscular pains—we don't know how they do it in every case, just as we do not know how the acutipuncturist, by putting a silver needle through your flesh, manages to effect the same cures. Acutipuncture can cure malaria sometimes. It does work clinically. So we accepted them, taught them how necessary it was to sterilise their instruments, gave them elementary training in anatomy, physiology and asepsis.

We hadn't enough western-trained doctors and we had to use what there was.

"From the beginning we never despised Chinese doctors. Their herb-medicines contain an enormous lot of nonsense, but the discovery of ephedrine, which is an adreniline substitute, is due to the fact that the Chinese have been using for centuries a particular herb from which ephedrine is still distilled. That was about 1926. There haven't been many great discoveries in Chinese herb-medicine since, but there is no reason why one should not appear some day. Acutipuncture is another matter. We know almost nothing about it, except that it works sometimes.

"From the beginning, too, everything was improvisation. *Sze ch'i tung hsueh*—move your own hands. This was the principle under which we worked, and it was the principle which applied throughout the Border Areas." We were going through the pharmacy in the caves, and he pointed to the bottles on the shelves. "This meant that we made tannic acid and tannic albumen from bark, glucose from local beet sugar and from the salt-wells in the north we made magnesium sulphate, sodium bicarbonate, magnesium sulphate and all the other derivatives from salt. Only it was bitter salt, and not very good. We got merchants to smuggle in a few things in bales of cotton, we made our own woollen blankets and dyed them in our own woollen dyes, we made our own dentist's chairs, we invented our own technique, and though nearly everything was home-made we brought the infant mortality down to a figure which is fantastically low for China—2.8 per cent."

He liked to talk of the witch-doctors, with their swords, whips, rattles and circles of blazing fire which they drew round the patients. All that was strange and dappled in the world delighted him. In one of the caves he found a patient who was thought to be a girl until some curious

sexual development occurred, and he became a boy. "How the devil could they tell what has happened?" he laughed. "There are hardly any secondary sexual characteristics among the Chinese. The girls have hardly any breasts, and the boys don't have to shave. Well, we've sewed him up, but the poor devil probably won't be able to do anything with it, even though he's got it." He liked talking about the details of the hospital management, the days when you climbed the muddy stairs in a bitter winter, he admired the Chinese doctors and nurses, and he had a particular admiration for two doctors who had come up in 1938, after graduating from the Shantung Christian University, and remained ever since. There had been lonely desolate moments when they felt themselves ineffective because they were so completely cut off from the world. They had trained over 3,500 doctors in a short-term training course in the Border Areas, but they wished they had trained ten times as many. Now nearly every village possessed its doctor. There were co-operatives in everything: spinning and weaving co-operatives, farm co-operatives, teaching co-operatives and now there were medical co-operatives. "We try to teach the peasants not to live with their animals and to dig their latrines far from their houses. Ultimately, of course, the problem is economic. He will live with his animals, and catch all the diseases that come from living with his animals, until he can afford to build a separate house for the animals. We can't force them to do these things. We have to train them gradually. The tempo is slow. We try to educate the primary school children and the soldiers—especially the soldiers, because they are usually in close contact with the villagers, but we wish sometimes we were going faster."

We came down the slope, and looked up again at the two hundred caves in the cliff-wall and at the small grey-

tiled building which had been built when the last bombings came to an end in 1943. The winter wheat was shining on the crown of the mountain. White-capped nurses with white blouses and white trousers were climbing down the loess paths. It was a good place to be in.

XXII THE PRISON

If a man commits adultery or robbery or murder, it seems absurd to shut him up in a room; captivity is not a punishment so much as an enforced state of mind bordering on madness. You can't cure people of evil by enclosing them within four walls: you can't prevent them from committing crimes, but you can be certain that you have not uprooted the causes of crime by enclosing them in their own original loneliness. I had little desire to see the jail. They were a long way from the village, and you reached it by a winding road without any shade. The sun beat down on the dust, and the dust made life miserable. You wished you weren't going to see the jail, and you wished you could just talk to people instead of being led on what would probably be a Cook's tour through a model prison, which was unlike every other prison in the world only because it was in Yenan.

I was in that kind of rebellious mood when I went to the prison, but the mood did not last long. The sun was pitiless, the prison caves were higher up the mountain than I had imagined, but the prison itself with its high walls cut out of the loess was curiously impressive, and still more impressive were the faces of the judges we met. They looked like the best kind of judges. There was one with a

grey moustache, a long nose and extraordinarily eloquent hands—it was easy enough to imagine him in a wig and gown on the bench of the Law Courts in London. The other resembled a thickset old peasant, with a square face, square-cut hands and a solid, unpretentious manner. They were reasonable men, and you felt instinctively that they dispensed justice calmly and sensibly. And you felt—for you had seen them all over Yenan—that these men were not exceptional, and nearly all the prisons were exactly like the one we were seeing.

They described the administration of justice in the Border Area; there was nothing exciting about it, but they spoke with a grave sense of responsibility and humanity. There was a portrait of Sun Yat-sen on the wall, and there was something in the gravity of the old revolutionary's face which added to the solemnity of the occasion.

"Nearly all civil cases," they said, "are administered according to the laws of the Central Government. The exceptions relate to marriage and land tenure—all questions concerning marriage are determined much more simply, usually by the council of the villagers, and all questions concerning land obey laws which have been set down by ourselves.

"The National Government, for example, has three kinds of punishment for murder depending on the gravity of the case—death, whole life imprisonment and ten years' imprisonment. We have abandoned whole life imprisonment, because we believe that a punishment of ten years' imprisonment is as much as anyone can bear. The death sentence is carried out by shooting.

"There are two stages in the punishment of offenders and the administration of justice. First there is the district court, which has power to give sentences; but the prisoner is allowed to appeal to the Supreme Court and in all serious

cases he will appeal. The Supreme Court re-examines the case, and if it is a case of considerable gravity, or if the assessors are still at variance in their interpretation of the case, there is final appeal to the Governor of the Border Region. The Governor can, if he disagrees with the verdict, send the papers back for revision.

"Theft is still a problem, but we have noticed that it has considerably diminished—if the peasants have enough to eat, if the co-operatives are well-planned and there is sufficient production for everyone, then we can look forward to a time when theft will be almost non-existent. The cases were getting fewer and fewer each year. Here again we have slightly altered the system of punishment from that which is enforced by the National Government. In ordinary cases the first offence is punished by imprisonment for one year, the second, third and fourth offences are punished by imprisonment for two years, but after that the punishment becomes much heavier—he may be sentenced for ten years. He is punished with forced labour, but he is paid for his labour, we save money for him and when he is released we buy him a home and furniture, and show him how to earn a living. Theft, more than any other crime, is economic; and if we give him a home and a living, we can expect that he will behave better in the future.

"We are still not in a position to deal very effectively with sexual crimes—we have no psychiatrists, and the punishment is inevitably rough and ready, depending on circumstances. The punishment for rape is divided into three categories: whether the offence has been committed against a young girl, an unmarried woman or a married woman. In no case is the punishment more than seven years' hard labour.

"There are two kinds of hard labour—they work in the fields, or they spin and weave. You'll see later that spin-

ning and weaving are really hard labour indeed. They are not pampered, but they are given opportunities to learn how to read and write, and if they are particularly brilliant they are given more and more education. They are also taught some elementary economics and political science, and their reading will probably be from newspapers and the speeches of our political leaders.

"Children's crimes are settled in local courts—we have no special children's courts, and the ordinary method of trial only affects those who are eighteen years of age or over. Recently a shepherd boy threw a stone at another boy, throwing him over a cliff. This is the kind of thing that is settled in the local court. If a father is in prison and cannot support his family, they are allowed to come to the prison. If a prisoner cannot see his family and gets no letters from his family he suffers terribly and unfairly. We don't mollycoddle them, but we want them to become responsible members of society, and we do everything in our power to see that they get letters and see their families. In one or two cases we have allowed the wives to stay with them, but this is exceptional—the wives do not live in the prison, but are given a plot of land nearby.

"There is little gambling, and very little banditry. The secret societies, like the Greens and the Reds and the Great Dragon Society, no longer have any power in the Border Areas; they have been taken out by the roots. This is not so difficult to understand, because the peasant units are organised to an extent which was undreamed of before.

"There is treachery sometimes, but that makes little headway either. And we have developed a system which takes care of that. You may laugh at it, and you may not believe it, but it is a good system. The traitors or the spies from Kuomintang areas are not shot. It would be easy enough to shoot them, but what use? You shoot a man,

you can terrorise a man, but you cannot make him a responsible member of the human community either way. We have been deliberately lenient with spies, because we find that they can be educated. A short while ago there was a nineteen-year-old boy in Sian who was given orders to assassinate the head of the Communist delegation there. He failed. He was then ordered to come to Yenan and assassinate people here. He was given poison and instructed to enter the University. Hundreds of students were entering the University—without papers, without passports. We could examine most of them, and find out why they were coming, but occasionally they came as wreckers. He came. He failed to poison members of the government, and began to try to poison some of the students with strange poisons dropped in their millet. He was given two years' jail and closely watched. His heart was not in it, and after fourteen months he was released.

"Psychologically, it works. These people are usually forced to become spies and murderers, their families are threatened with jail if they fail and they have no other alternative except to carry out their orders. But when they know that the game's up and they have failed to carry out their orders, they are malleable material. Of course, there are some professional spies who will go on even after they have been released. Some years ago there was a spy who deliberately attempted to create trouble—murdering and robbing and killing the peasants. He was sent to prison for three years, and he is still there. But on the whole, since every village has its *Ming Ping* and the headman is in close touch with the *hsien* government, and the people are for the government, there is usually very little chance for the most astute spy to do harm. Everyone knows everyone else in the villages, and the appearance of a stranger will lead to comment. They will examine his papers carefully,

and if his story doesn't look very convincing, there will be inevitable enquiries.

"Recently we have introduced a new rule for long-term prisoners who are married. If he is in for ten years, after two or three years he will be allowed to have his wife with him. There is only one wife now in the prison—her husband came from the frontiers, and for some reason the villagers could not support her. She was taught spinning and given land, and she can see her husband. In cases like this—with very poor families from a long way away—there is no other solution.

"The prisoners are allowed to call meetings, and if one prisoner misbehaves, the other prisoners will criticise him. They work eight hours a day—it is hard work, and study for two hours—and that too is hard for some of them. It is the same day after day but we try to relieve the monotony with meetings.

"The head of the Supreme Court is elected by the People's Political Congress, which itself is elected by the people. The judges are professional judges, usually trained in Kuomintang courts, who are appointed by the Border Region Government. In light cases the judge will judge alone, in more serious cases he will always be accompanied by assessors. There is no jury system yet, but we are determined to have one soon.

"It is not perfect, very few things are perfect but we are determined on one thing—and that is to judge humanely. We have learnt a great deal, but the administration of justice in a Border Area must have time to develop. Of one thing we are proud: we have discovered that it is unnecessary and ridiculous to shoot people except in cases of the most extreme crimes, and with patience and understanding we can often cure people of their evil intentions by education. I don't know whether that's done abroad,

but I insist that in many cases it is the only way. But it needs patience—a great deal of patience."

I have copied these statements from the notes I made at the time, without elaborating on them. They were old men and they spoke with the authority of old men. Chu Teh had insisted that they never shot captured soldiers, though the enemy was constantly shooting their captives, and it was easy to believe him, because the advantages of keeping them alive were considerably greater than the advantages of shooting them out of hand. So here, when they said that they did not kill spies or traitors except in the most provocative cases, it was easy to believe them. A catholic convert is far more violently catholic than one who has been catholic for generations. A spy who is given a light punishment, a wrecker who is not shot out of hand but carefully instructed in the enormity of his crime against the people, may become just such a convert. It was good psychology, and it was good administration of justice.

We went round the prison. The judge had said there was no mollycoddling: there was none, and yet the prison compared favourably with factories in Shanghai. The prisoners looked well-fed. They worked in long barn-like buildings with wooden spinning machinery. As you entered the building, there was such a roar of clicking spindles that you thought you had entered a modern factory. But everything was home-made, and power came from treadles. All over the prison there were these noisy spinning treadmills. Nearly all were men. We counted only four women, and these were in prison, according to the judges, for murder or attempted murder of their husbands. Some of the men looked brutal. There were watch-towers high on the loess cliffs with armed guards looking out across the landscape. One wished they were not there —the guns looked too dramatically poised to kill anyone

who escaped—but it was the same in America and England. "We are determined to get rid of criminality by teaching," one of the judges had said. "We are organising a social system which will make crime go under, because there will be no need for crime." It was too early to tell whether this experiment was succeeding but you felt they were honest men and would do everything in their power to make it succeed.

XXIII THE BOY

YENAN was hardly more than a cluster of small villages in a broad valley. They were agricultural villages, and sometimes you sighed for a splash of colour among those baking hot yellows and faint greens. There were few trees; the women wore the same faded blue coats and trousers as the men, and though you noticed the brightness of their faces, there were moments when you wanted to take a paint-brush and put violent reds and purples and magentas on the scene. There were festivals, but they occurred rarely. There were theatres where the actors wore the brightest brocades and painted themselves merrily; there were marriage ceremonies where the bride came on horse-back down the streets dressed in ceremonial costume; there were the *yangko* plays where the native genius of these people for violently contrasting colours came into full play; but on those sweltering afternoons you could only look forward to the moment of sunset when the winter wheat on the hill flashed gold.

Yet sometimes there was colour in the Persian saddle-bows, or in the young girl whose apple-red face gleamed above faded blue cotton so brightly that you were startled.

You noticed that the yellows and the greens changed colour. A lorry or a motor-car would pass in the distance, throwing up a tower of yellow dust, and in the late afternoons, when the tower reached the sun, it blazed splendidly. Or else you noticed on the cliff-walls a solitary woven blanket in striped reds and purples, and this too would absorb the sunlight till the eye, so long accustomed to yellow and green, grew dazzled in exactly the same way that you are dazzled when, looking at the white walls of a Moorish palace, you see a square blue stone inserted at a place where it relieves all monotony and gives strength and continuity to the place.

One evening, when the sunlight fell on the uplands and the valley was already frozen in greyness, a boy came down the dusty road leading some pigs. The pigs were black once, but now the yellow dust had turned them almost silver. The boy was about fourteen, but tall and well-made, and you would have said he was older except for the childishness round the mouth. Sometimes he played on a flute, and sometimes he shouted at some girls who were talking to soldiers on a low wall; and when he had passed down the road and thought there was no one there, he began to sing. It was dark in the street, but he had come at that moment into the brazen red light of a forge, and then you noticed that he wore a bright blue cap, torn white trousers and some bands of red silk round the waist as bright as a gash. He was bare-chested and in the light of the forge his boyish chest shone like gold. He had forgotten about the pigs. He leaned negligently on the staff, and continued to sing and play on his flute until someone came to attend the forge. Then he went down the road, and you heard the boy singing and the grunting of the pigs.

XXIV THE COMMUNIST DELEGATE

I HAD read his name occasionally in the newspapers, and heard that there was once a price on his head. He had been to Chungking several times during the war, he had lived in Sian and I think he was there during the famous Sian Incident, and he had taken part in the People's Political Congress which might have altered the destiny of China if the Kuomintang had accepted its resolutions. He talked easily and pleasantly in good swift English, and he liked talking. He was a member of the Central Committee, and he attended the People's Consultative Conference which was called to put an end to all the troubles.

"It was like a honeymoon," he said. "The bride and the bridegroom were married at last, and you forgot that they might quarrel again. There were eight Kuomintang members, seven Communists, nine from the Democratic League, nine from the Youth League and nine non-party members. Dr. Sun Fo was the president of the Conference, and the right of veto was held in six hands. We made decisions and recommendations on the most important things unanimously, but we didn't realise that every single decision and every recommendation might be thrown out by the Generalissimo.

"It was that kind of conference. It had no power from the beginning, but if its decisions had been implemented, there would be peace in China today. We saw and felt that the proportions of the delegates gave room for a final verdict—it was not a one-party conference, it was more representative than any conference up to that time, and it was dealing with urgent realities. It began to look as though the Kuomintang Government was prepared to surrender some of its power to the people.

"But the Kuomintang was not prepared. It has done it before, and it didn't matter to them that they were prepared to break their promises. Eight times they have given dates for the calling of a National Congress which will wield supreme power—eight times they have failed to call the congress. We were determined that the Legislature should have supreme power, just as the House of Commons and Congress wield supreme power. The Kuomintang objected afterwards, but they agreed well enough during the Conference.

"Let us go back to old history. According to the Sino-Russian treaty the Soviet Armies were to evacuate Manchuria by December 1st, 1945. It was later proposed that they should remain, and it was the Kuomintang which wanted them to remain and safeguard the railways until they had massed sufficient forces to use the railways to attack us. The Kuomintang followed the Soviet Armies into Mukden; simultaneously we took Shipingchieh. In March there were more conversations in Chungking, and we agreed to abandon Shipingchieh if there was a general, universal cease-fire order given by the Kuomintang authorities. They did not give the order. The Kuomintang demanded undisputed control of all railways in Manchuria, basing their demand on the agreement signed by both parties with General Marshall on January 10th that "the cessation of hostilities order does not prejudice military movements of forces of the National Army into or within Manchuria which are for the purpose of restoring Chinese sovereignty". We were prepared to let them enter Manchuria, though they had fled from Manchuria. But we were not prepared to give them undisputed control of the whole area—Chinese sovereignty had already been achieved by the occupation of Communist forces. Parts of the Mukden-Dairen and parts of the Mukden-Changchun rail-

way were in our hands. The 13th and 52nd National Armies attacked us, there were demonstrations in Chungking, they were arresting Communists everywhere, they attacked the last meeting which was held to congratulate the People's Political Council on its success, and some of their thugs beat up distinguished members of the meeting like Kuo Mo-jo, Li K'ung-po and others. We knew their temper. We knew they were out to annihilate us again, and they were beginning to think they could annihilate us with American equipment. It was that kind of war.

"The details are not important now, but they were important at the time. Odd things were always happening. General Chen Chun, the Chief-of-Staff, personally agreed at a party given to a delegation of Manchurian industrialists that a general, universal cease-fire order would be given. He promised to sign it the next day. This was on April 13th. On the 14th General Chen Chun flew to Shanghai, and on the same day the Generalissimo returned from Kweiyang. The order was never signed.

"Changchun was next on the list. The Kuomintang wanted it, and they were preparing their forces against it. They wanted it unconditionally, and they didn't care if they had to wage a battle for it. Every possible device was put forward to prevent bloodshed. General Marshall suggested that the city should be taken over by a delegation of Kuomintang, Communist and American officers from Executive Headquarters. Another proposal put forward was that Chou En-lai, Chiang Chia-wu (head of the economic affairs bureau of Manchuria appointed by the Kuomintang) and Mo Tu-huei (an important Manchurian industrialist) should themselves take over the city. All these suggestions were ignored. By the end of April we realised that they were still determined to annihilate us. The Generalissimo came to Sian for the first time for many

years, and we heard that he was organising with Pai Hsiung-hsi an effort to exterminate us in the Hupeh-Honan area.

"We were suspicious of the Kuomintang, and we had cause to be. The oddest, the most extraordinarily inept measures were taken against us. They had wrecked our publishing house in Chungking—this was mad enough, but now when the Communist delegates attempted to fly from Chungking to Nanking they thought they could get rid of us more easily. The American pilot reported that there was something wrong with the plane, but the officials at the airport insisted that we should take the plane. Tung Pei-wu one of the leaders of the delegation, protested firmly. The aeroplane flew off, but a quarter of an hour later both engines went dead.

"We are fighting against a delaying system which has been organised—not very well organised, but still organised. We do not want power now. We could not run the government if we had it. But we do want an end to the extraordinarily dictatorial and corrupt rule of the Kuomintang as it is now. We want the National Congress. The Kuomintang is afraid that if there is a freely-elected National Congress, they will lose power. They will certainly lose power because it is reasonably certain that the first thing the elected Congress will do will be to take the army out of political hands, and wipe the secret police off the map. But what is good in them will survive, and what is good in us will survive.

"We are not a small party any longer. What rankled with the Kuomintang was that they were compelled at the People's Consultative Council to recognise the existence of the Communist Party after eighteen years of war, and to recognise the existence of other parties. We want an end to the secret police which numbers over 200,000 men. We

want an end to the idiotic rule by which houses in Shanghai and elsewhere can be searched without warrant by any member of the secret police, and everyone is regarded as a political suspect. What might have been a great revolutionary force in the country has become now the instrument of a reaction, and now the reaction must go—as it will go—because soon, inevitably, they must agree to the calling of a National Congress which will be more representative of the people than anything that has gone before."

By the time anyone reads this, it will all be old history. China will have gone through more crises; a solution for the civil war may have been found, but in the main it is clear that there can be no real peace under the Kuomintang dictatorship, and perhaps there will be no peace at all until a legislature depending on the people has been formed. There had been the honeymoon. Sooner or later the couple would have to settle down to ordinary married life, without scratching and backbiting. In the tempestuous and bloody course of modern Chinese politics, with its murders, its assassinations, its ruthless repressions, there were signs that those who were most moderate and most representative of the people would prevail.

XXV THE POET

He wore his blue cotton coat like a cape, and though he must have been fifty, he walked with a swagger, his black beard coiling in the wind. He was K'e Chung-ping, the poet, a man who sang for the people and thought it was

not worth while to write poetry unless the people sang it. He came from Yunnan, and may have had tribal blood in him, and when he sang his own poems or the poems he had learned from the peasants in the mountains, his red, bearded face took on an aspect of extraordinary gravity and repose.

There were many in Yenan who regarded him as the greatest of the popular poets because he had combined with his political opinions a lyric depth of feeling. Years ago, in Shanghai, he wrote a long epic describing the Red Armies. It was before the Long March, yet the description of the hardships endured by the armies until they reached the Wind Fire Mountains was like the hardships Mao Tse-tung and Chu Teh had endured. No copies of the epic, which had 20,000 lines, have remained; all were confiscated, and the poet himself was imprisoned three times, once by the war-lord Sun Chuan-fang and twice by the Kuomintang. "The worst of it is that your teeth fall out, and your hair falls out, and it is years before you can forget the bite of the manacles on your legs. It was worse than Dante's *Inferno*. The food was bad, and mixed with gravel and chaff; the only vegetables I ate were dried cabbages."

He could not remember much of the poem—prison had put an almost blank wall between himself and the past. He could remember odd verses, which he was good enough to write down, and the verses he liked best he asked permission to sing. He sang them superbly, stopping halfway to ask if he was boring his audience; but the audience had long ago agreed that they had never known a poet who sang his own poetry so well. He had a great fund of folk-songs, and insisted that the real poetry of the country lay in the fields and villages. He liked particularly poems of love or utter grief; for grief digs deep roots in

China, and these he would sing as though the grief had only that moment struck him, in a piercing voice, the eyes closed, the expression agonised. There was a Yunnanese song he had heard in his native village of Kuang-nang, nine days' journey from Kumming. He would begin slowly in a deep voice, but the last line he uttered in a grief-stricken falsetto:

The sunset and the flowers fade,
The bees come to taste the flowers,
The bees come, and the flowers are faded.
The elder brother looks at the sister's open grave.

Nothing could be simpler, and nothing could be more complex, for the elder brother and the sister were evidently lovers according to a Chinese poetic tradition: grief and love were inextricably combined. So had Hamlet sung over Ophelia's grave in the days when English poetry spoke of such elementary things.

In the long poem *Feng Ho San* (Wind Fire Mountain) he remembered most the lyrical songs. Like Goethe's *Faust* the poem seems to have contained innumerable short songs interspersed with declamations and descriptions, battle-scenes and songs sung round camp-fires while the soldiers toiled towards the mysterious mountain where all their hopes would become real. It was significant that the title itself should come from an old Chinese ballad. There was, for example, the song of a drunken goat-herd:

Drink down the fine sweet wine!
Seal your hundred flower hearts.
I am a wandering saint.
May you laugh at the third watch of the night,
On the fifth watch you may have tears.

I ride on my black-headed horse
Through forty li *of roads,*
Past fifty li *of mountain caves.*
O pluck the poppy flower,
And be drunk with sleep!

I am the saint of the south mountain.
There are witches on the mountain of the north.
There are dark caves.
O brother, go to the north mountain.
O sister, go to the south mountain.
I am the saint from the south!

As he sung these songs, you had an extraordinary impression that he was singing an Elizabethan love-song. Grief, the lover's grief, entered into the songs sung by the soldiers after battle:

Some day there will be judgement for the dead!
We shall know who killed the headless corpse.
Have the mountain spirits killed him?
On the second moon they come to this boy's grave.
Brothers and sisters come to look at the dead.
O mountains filled with lamentation!

No one must weep for the beloved,
The tea-flowers are beginning to blossom.
Why weep and destroy your eyes?
*The reeds flower on these white-haired nights.**
The boy you dream of is still young. . . .

It was no wonder that he was regarded as a great poet when he could turn the simple ballad rhythms and the

* At weddings in China the couples drink "white-haired wine" as a sign that they will grow old together.

ballad imagery into songs that could be still sung by the people. Ai Ching was a poet's poet, who knew his craft perfectly, but he did not *sing*. K'e Chung-ping sang because it was the only voice he possessed—he had been too long in prison to believe that there was anything else worth doing. He sings of his imaginary Red Army coming towards the end of its journey, the Wind Fire Mountain before them:

Now in April, with a thousand toils, ten thousand hardships,
We have come at last into our worldly inheritance.
O the great sons and great daughters!
The road shines with blood, yet we sing the war-song.
As long as the two ends of a wheat-stalk are pointed,
There will be pure springs on the high mountains.
O, our stomachs are full of noodles dipped in sauce.
The mountain roars, the wave surges.
Only when you work hard do you realise the taste of wine and meat!

There was a perfection in his work which was sometimes startling, and you wondered why, of all the books which have become lost, the long revolutionary epic with the glorious title *Wind Fire Mountain* should be among them.

XXVI KALGAN

THERE had been sun every day in Yenan, but on the last day Mao Tse-tung and Chu Teh came down to the airfield in the rain, in their sandals and blue cotton clothes, while

the sky looked utterly grey and the valley was lost in the rain-mist. For the first time in eleven days there was no sun on the valley; and somehow it seemed wrong. There is sun nearly all the year round in northern Shensi, a hard glittering baking sunlight, which hardly changes in its intensity, though the seasons change. I asked Mao again about his poems. He made the same handshake, smiled and said he still thought the poems were *ma-ma-hu-hu*, and meanwhile Chu Teh stood a little way away, lost in thought, the fine old face looking graver than ever in the rain. But in Kalgan it was all sunlight.

The valley of Kalgan is twenty times wider than the valley of Yenan, a great curving sweep of valley rising towards dark mountains. The mountains were not close to you; they did not oppress you, and they were magnificently formed, with peaks and promontories and huge black buttresses which rose from the plain. There were two cities, the old dark walled city, tortuous and decaying, and the new city of reinforced concrete built largely by the Japanese. They had had eight years to build the place, but they had not finished when the three Communist columns came from north, east and south on August 27th, 1945, and threw the Japanese in confusion. The Japanese had left at last for Japan, but Kalgan was full of their traces—there were *tatamis** everywhere, there were gaunt grey buildings and factories, there was machinery in the printing works which was less than three years old. What was surprising was the newness of the Japanese town, and how incomplete it was; here there would be a building, and there a vegetable patch, and farther on another building. So it must have been in the American west in the early days. Kalgan was always a frontier town; it lay on the great wall; it had existed at least as long ago as the Han Dynasty, for a famous Han governor had inscribed

*Raised Japanese flowers.

on the city gateway in his own hand: "O good and great country", and the inscription remained. The Empress Dowager had passed through here on her return from exile in Sian. Feng Yu-hsiang had once made the city his headquarters. On the Nankao Pass, between Kalgan and Pekin, innumerable battles had been fought, and it was there that the last defenders of Pekin in 1937 had been mown down by the Japanese. But Kalgan had changed completely. Among these pepper-coloured plains and sharp-toothed hills, the impact of modern industrialism was being felt. At this time only one other industrial city was owned by the Communists—Harbin.

The farmers came in on their small carts, soldiers marched through the streets and sometimes, seeing those scattered and often half-finished buildings, you felt you were still in a country of farmers; but late at night you heard the roar of machinery. It was utterly unlike Yenan. Yenan might be more conscious of its responsibilities as an administrative centre, but Kalgan at the centre of the Chin-Cha-Chi area, was conscious of its industrial potential. The factories were everywhere, and smoke came from their chimneys. There were coal-mines on the hills, which the Japanese had worked savagely, surrounding them with electrified barbed wire; if a Chinese labourer fell ill, he was left to die. Iron ore was brought by railway, mica and asbestos were mined, there were cinemas and innumerable shops, there were palaces and memorials to the Japanese dead, there were broad paved streets which led out into open country and then continued—they did not become mule-tracks. The people walked twice as quickly as they walk in Pekin. And in spite of the Japanese occupation, the *tatamis* and the shrines and the constant invasions and civil wars, it seemed to belong perfectly to the Chinese, and you realised that all over

China there would soon be cities like these. This was modern industrialism; this was railways and mining and reinforced concrete. It was a city of peasants and workmen, the shepherd boys tending their sheep on the sand-hills in the shadow of a factory and at midday, in the shade of the poplars, the workmen in blue cotton were resting. The old Chinese walls were crumbling. From now on it would be concrete, not stone. And you had only to shut your eyes to see the same thing in the farthest provinces of China.

It was heady wine for the Chinese who came here for the first time after living in villages and fighting as guerrillas. An industrial city, white, clear and shining in the sun.

XXVII THE PALACE OF PRINCE TEH

THE palace lay under the shadow of Great Divine Son Mountain, a bleak blue range of mountains which straddled east of Kalgan, looking menacing enough in the rain. Even when the sun shone these savage cliffs looked menacing, and the small pagodas perched on the summits of its sheer foot-hills did not look like pleasure houses: they were pagodas of iron, starkly etched against the lowering sky, almost terrifying. But the palace, with its marble dragons and painted eaves and innumerable court-yards folding into one another, was completely delightful. Until he fled, it was occupied by Prince Teh, whose other titles were Prince Demchukdongrob, Lord of West Sunid, of the Silingol Banner in the north of Chahar. He had occupied the palace on the invitation of the Japanese, with his concubines and retainers, a tall man,

with a close-cropped skull, already ageing; and they said he had the keenest eyes of anyone in Mongolia and the greatest ambition to imitate Genghiz Khan and carve out of Asia a new kingdom for the Mongols. Before the surrender of the Japanese, he had fled to Pekin and then to Chungking, where he was received with due ceremony as the leader of the Mongol Horde. The Communists said: "He lived here under the Japanese, therefore he was a traitor, and we would have killed him if he had not fled."

The palace was now occupied by the Communist Governor of the province, a thickset man with fine mobile features and a reputation for good calligraphy, hard-headed and earnest. It was this man who had most of the responsibility of seeing that Chin-Cha-Chi suffered as few growing pains as possible. He was obviously overworked, but what was amazingly attractive was that he did not resemble in any way any preconceived idea of a governor. The mayor of Pekin, Hsiung Ping, looks like a governor —fat, and of course immensely wealthy. Governor Sung of Chin-Cha-Cha could have been a precision worker in a factory, a professor or a civil servant or anything you please. He had a heavy forehead; you could feel the power behind it; you were conscious that he would stand no nonsense; like Mao Tse-tung he had developed a curiously flamboyant calligraphy, but he spoke in a quiet slow voice which the interpreter found the greatest difficulty in understanding. He was amused with the idea of living in Prince Demchukdongrob's palace and sleeping in Prince Demchukdongrob's bed. He was amused, and he was a little sad, and he always looked slightly lost in the reception-room with the gilded pillars and the yellow satin embroidery on the chairs and sofas.

And then others came in, General Nieh, the military

governor of the Border Area, and General Tsai—both had been on the Long March, but no two people could be more different. Nieh had studied in Paris and Belgium. For a while he studied chemical engineering at Charleroi University. He had a keen pale intelligent face, a good forehead, the manners of an eighteenth-century cavalier. He had directed with two others the operation over the Tatu Bridge. He laughed easily and splendidly, and he liked telling stories and possessed a quiet, mordant humour. (Someone asked him why there were so many aged American colonels in Executive Headquarters. He replied: "Perhaps the President of the United States has heard that we Chinese have a deep respect for age.") General Tsai looked like a factory worker. He had lost an arm in the Long March. The mouth was bitter and indrawn, but the eyes were large and transparently clear. He said very little, but what he said was always to the point. He was vice-chairman of the military-political bureau.

There were many others, but what was surprising was that they could easily be divided into two types—those who had returned from France or Belgium, and those who had remained in China. You could distinguish the types at once. Neither looked like the current conception of what a Communist leader should look like. You would see these people in any American or English town, you would be friendly with them and get to like them. They felt that the government of the Kuomintang was a travesty of a government, but they knew that they were unprepared to take over the power. They were conscious—no one could be more conscious—of their limitations. They did not look sly, and not one of them resembled the pot-bellied compradore type which spills over Nanking. They would not beg for help, they did not care very much if they

were misunderstood and they were about as independent as the Americans were during the war of independence. They liked good food, but they didn't care very much if there wasn't any. They liked good wine—there is excellent grape-wine produced in Huahsien on the road between Pekin and Kalgan—and they drank innumerable toasts for no particular reason except that there were a considerable number of bottles available. And then, when we went out into the court-yard, where it was still raining and the marble lions looked more arrogant than ever, you half expected to see Prince Demchukdongrob surrounded by his concubines and walking in the rain, for nothing can be more pleasurable to a Mongolian than to walk in the rain, and nothing fills him with a greater love for the vast plains. But instead there were Communist delegates in blue cotton suits, looking rather shabby except for General Nieh who wore a uniform taken from the stores left by the Japanese.

XXVIII MORE ABOUT MAO TSE-TUNG

It was said all over Yenan that Mao hated to talk about himself. For four nights he had discussed his own biography with Edgar Snow. It was necessary at that time: the Long March of the Communist armies was unknown, its leaders were unknown, and even the objects of the Long March were unknown. But at that time Mao had said he would never write about himself again, he was not important, the movement among the peasants, the farmers and the factory-workers was far more important than any single man. Probably he meant all

this. It was infinitely difficult to get any information about him.

But in Kalgan there lived a man who had known Mao Tse-tung since he was twelve years old. His name was Hsiao San, he was editor of a newspaper and looked like a professor at the Sorbonne. He was born like Mao Tse-tung in Hsiang-tang in Hunan, and though he had left China for two long periods of study in France and Russia, he had kept up a correspondence with his childhood friend. He lived in a small Japanese house, with the usual patterned and uncomfortable sofas, the usual *tatamis* and sliding panels and rooms which were so small that they resembled wooden prisons. We had some friends in common who had taken part in the Spanish civil war, and I got him to talk about Mao Tse-tung.

"Mao is the most complex person we have," Hsiao San said, when I spoke about the incredible difference which existed between Mao bare-headed and Mao wearing a peasant cap—the scholar could so easily turn into a peasant, a schoolboy, the vicar at a harvest festival, the poet, the soldier and the political leader. "None of us have really understood him. I have known him longer than anyone else, but I have never got to the root of him.

"When he was sixteen and I was twelve, I met him for the first time. He was hurrying down a road with a parcel of books under his arm. I had seen him before—he always had books. A few days later I lent him a book about the great heroes of the world. It was a book with articles about Peter the Great, Wellington, Washington, Lincoln, Rousseau, Montesquieu and Napoleon and perhaps twenty others. He read the whole book in one night, and gave it back to me, saying: "We need great people like these in China."

"In those days when I remember him, it is always the

scholar. There was a free library in Changsha. He would stay there all day, reading, reading, reading. He didn't read with any deliberate plan—he read everything, everything without exception, politics, economics, history, *The Dream of the Red Chamber* which he admired immensely, the histories of the famous generals like Yueh Fei. He noticed that in all the epics and legends of the past there were always victorious emperors and generals, but no victorious peasants. He was himself the son of a peasant. His father had been in the army. When he returned from the wars, he bought twelve *mou* of land and made young Mao work with him in the fields. The father was often brutal and cursed him, quoting Confucius and saying that the son should obey the father implicitly. In answer, Mao quoted another chapter from the *Analects* where the father is enjoined to treat the son mercifully. It was from that time, I think, that there dates Mao's implacable opposition to Confucianism.

"In 1911 he was eighteen, and had been for a short while conscripted in the army. He was still reading furiously, but now he was reading chiefly the works of Adam Smith, Darwin and Spencer, which had been all translated into classical Chinese by the celebrated translator Yen Fu. At this time he read a book by Chiang Kan-fu on socialism. If you read it now, you would think the book was ridiculous—it was a terribly muddle-headed book, but it contained some good quotations and it belonged to the school of thought which owed much to the Reform Party in China under Kang Yu-wei and Liang Ch'i-ch'iao. It was half-baked, like so much that was being written by Chinese at that time, but it was the first time Mao had heard of socialism. All his sympathies, all his scholarship, all his memories of life in the field and in the army seemed to lead to one conclusion—he would become

a socialist. Later he read three books: the Communist Manifesto, Kautsky's *The Class-war* and a history of socialism by someone whose name I've forgotten. He was completely thunderstruck by these books.

"At that time he wanted to be a teacher—or rather, he did not know what he wanted to be, but he thought that if he was a teacher, he would have time for reading, and writing. He wanted passionately to be a writer. He still went to the library early in the morning, slipped out of the library for lunch and read again until the library closed. He had little money, and his parents were complaining. He entered the normal school. He passed through the entrance examination with flying colours—the principal of the school publicly posted his essay on the wall and commended him. At first the principal could hardly believe it could be written by one so young. At this time he was absorbed in Chinese history.

"It was the time of the European war. I still saw him nearly every day, and now I noticed that he was passionately reading every newspaper he could lay his hands on. The war fascinated him. He knew all kinds of details, and he could explain during our evening walks what it was all about, what important factors there were, and where it was leading. In 1920 I went to France. Mao himself had organised some of the groups which went to France—you could study and work for your living at the same time. Many of the people who went were his friends, and he begged them to go. For himself he preferred to remain in China where he could work out his own destiny. He was already conscious of his leadership.

"He has won battles, but his knowledge of war came from his wide reading, from his association with the peasants, with the legends of the past and with an incident which occurred at the normal school. Soldiers came and

wanted to take it over. This is the kind of thing that happens all over China—soldiers try to take over schools because they are the largest available buildings. It is happening now in Pekin. Mao organised the defence of the school. He drilled the students and the professors, and however unlikely it sounds, he gave orders to the senior professors which were instantly obeyed. We even bought arms in Changsha to defend the school, and medical supplies. We kept the soldiers out and Mao Tse-tung remarked: "Well, this is the first time I have taken military command." He seemed to know that it wouldn't be the last.

"He is fifty-three now, and he has been many things in his time. He has led armies, he has been secretary to the old reactionary Hu Han-min, he has been editor of an official Kuomintang newspaper—the *Political Daily* which was issued in Canton before the Northern Expedition, he has been director-general of propaganda under the Central Committee of the Kuomintang; but it was only this year that he assumed for the first time the acknowledged leadership of the Communist Party. There have been many changes within the party, many quarrels. But what he likes to remember most is the days when he wandered round the districts of Hunan in great poverty, wearing a sun-helmet, a white shirt, white trousers and sandals, and organised the peasants.

"Three or four times he nearly died of weakness during the Long March, which he directed with Chu Teh. They went through nine provinces, Kwangtung, Hunan, Kwangsi, Kweichow, Yunnan, Sikong, Szechuan, Kansu and Shensi. Many stronger men died on the journey. He was strong—he put tremendous significance on physical health in his youth, and liked wandering through the countryside in all weathers—but he looked ill when it was

over. He still looks after his health carefully. He eats less pepper and smokes less cigarettes, and doesn't read late into the night any more, unless he has to. His speaking voice is not good, but when he makes speeches he has all the air of an old peasant—*un sage paysan,* and he is loved by them because he says, only more forcibly than they say them, the things that are on their minds. He is not an actor. He has no dramatic appeal. He talks simply. He delights in being as scientifically accurate as possible, but at the same time he is a dreamer and a poet. His poetry is a kind of secret vice. He won't show it to anyone except his closest intimates like Chu Teh or Lin Po-chu. I spent nearly ten years in Russia, coming back in May, 1939, through Urumchi, Lanchow and Sian, and the odd thing was that he seemed hardly to have changed at all."

XXIX THE CINEMA

THERE were two or three cinemas in Kalgan, but there were very few films. Some months ago an American film had been shown there, but for the rest they had to show old Chinese and Russian films which dated from long before the war. It didn't matter; there were six theatres, and the theatres were more colourful and satisfying than the films. The cinema lay at the end of the new town, a great granite monolith of a cinema, which looked as though it had been designed by a drunken German. They were showing a Russian film called *Paramenko,* which celebrated the exploits of a commander in the Russian civil war who fought against the Germans and against the anarchist Makhno. Makhno was depicted as a savage

æsthete, a cross between Hitler, Oscar Wilde and Joan of Arc. The Germans goose-stepped into battle with drums playing, under an enormous battle-flag inscribed with the Maltese Cross and an inscription saying: "Gott und Kaiser mit uns." It was evidently an excellent film when it was made, but the emotions it conveyed were already out of date in Russia. On the other hand they were exactly the emotions of Communist China.

I have never seen an audience so gripped by a film. We were living under the same shadow—the shadow of the civil war, and it was easy enough in this northern territory, in the sweating stuffy granite cinema, to see that Paramenko was hardly different to Chu Teh. He was a more flamboyant Chu Teh. He rode on horseback with his cloak draped over his horse's cruppers, he had handlebar moustaches and made fiery speeches, rolling his eyes, and he was evidently the Russian conception of the hero. When men were defeatist, he shot them out of hand; when they won battles, he embraced them and kissed them loudly on both cheeks. It was all a little confusing. There was an extremely beautiful nurse who married Paramenko's aide-de-camp, and Paramenko wept at the wedding. The Chinese whistled whenever they saw kissing, and raised the roof with their shouts whenever the Russian guerrillas charged against the black ranks of the Germans. The film was torn to ribbons. Silver wounds were continually blotting out the faces of the actors. The Russian coming over the loudspeaker was indistinguishable from Hottentot. But what extraordinary passion and heroism and simplicity shone through the film! The Russians have become more complex since. They produced *Alexander Nevsky* and introduced a delicacy of understatement into its finest passages. *Paramenko* was full of emphasis, and the blue-coated boys and girls in

the audience, who all looked like workers and soldiers, saw all their own impatient sufferings and heroism on the tattered screen.

Hollywood had better beware! Drawing-room comedies and round-thighed bathing beauties are not the kind of things the young Chinese are going to absorb for ever. They are beginning to be puzzled by an art which revolves so curiously around the breasts, bellies and thighs of nubile young women. All their lives the young Chinese live in such terrible proximity to one another that they possess an inborn modesty; when you are crowded together with your parents, your grandparents and your own children on a single *k'ang,* or when you live sixty-eight together in a University dormitory the size of a small cow-shed, modesty becomes a daily necessity. They are perplexed and slightly shocked by our ineradicable delight in sexual stimulants. But there is a fortune to be made by someone who will bring to China and edit for a Chinese audience *The Birth of a Nation, The Plainsman, Desert Victory,* and a hundred other films which show man's conquest of the world around him.

Meanwhile it was inexpressibly disturbing to listen to their cheers, and to realise that within three or four days the truce between the Communists and the Kuomintang might end, and the same kind of war which was being described on the screen might take place in China. I wrote in my diary: "It was the same in Barcelona—the tremendous cheering, the certain consciousness of right, the drabness of the audience and the living excitement of their faces. They all looked so red-faced and happy during the intervals. Half of them were soldiers, and M. told me most of them would have left in three days for heaven knows where. I have more hope for these people than for any others, because they have an essential sim-

plicity and they are not drugged by the complexities which saddle us in the west. It's better like that. They are well-rooted. It's not that they are primitive—they are not in the least primitive—but they have such simple hopes. They lolled about and enjoyed themselves and spilt sunflower seeds disgustingly everywhere, and they didn't have any party manners. In Chungking and Pekin and Kunming at the cinemas everyone is perfectly behaved, the boy smarmed up and the girl with her prettiest frock. Here they looked as though they were busy, they had just stepped out of the farm, the barracks or the factory, and they had no time to look their best. But they looked better that way. And what they want more than anything is films about themselves, and it will be years before they have them."

XXX A JAPANESE SHRINE

THERE were no Japanese in Kalgan, but the Shinto shrine was still there with the three marble *torii,* the urns, the marble dragons and the stone-flagged pathway. From a distance the shrine seemed to be untouched, and since it was placed in a shallow valley overlooking the deeper valley of Kalgan, it still dominated the scene. Here on both sides were ranges of pepper-coloured mountains, and blue cornflowers grew in the grass, and there were no other houses or shrines in sight when you walked along the lane under the *torii.* At any moment you expected to see the Japanese priests dressed in white, and if there were no Japanese priests you expected them to return a little later. It was oddly impressive, to be in the heart of China, in a town through which the Great Wall passes

and from which the Japanese had fled, and to find the shrine still there.

The Chinese determine the places where they will put temples and tombs by geomancy, which is only another term for choosing what is most pleasing. They should be on mountain slopes, where there are woods and running water; they should face south, wherever possible; they should not disturb the pattern of the skyline or the patterns of rocks, but should be at the same time concealed and revealing of the contours of the land. Shinto shrines are often in woods. This shrine stood out on the sunbaked plain, totally unlike anything else in Kalgan, a small building of stone with pine rafters and a jutting low-hanging roof covered with blue copper-foil. It was perfect in its proportions, for it was not high and did not itself dominate the city, though the simple white marble archways with their double cross-beams seemed to dominate the valley for miles around. There were small temples along the road. There were urns and memorial stones, though the inscriptions were illegible—they had been chiselled off during the first weeks of victory. There were shallow earthenware or granite baths, where the ashes of the dead were sifted. There were small houses for the priests. But most of all you noticed the long stone path and the small shrine at the end.

Here the priests once chanted hymns and consecrated swords, bowing in the direction of Tokyo, and on days of special importance they hung the threaded rope over the door-posts. Along this road Japanese generals had walked in single file, barefoot and consecrated to the divine mission of putting the world to the sword; and it had seemed very sensible and holy to them, and they had no doubts whatsoever that they were dedicated beings. They had brought Japan to China. They lived in small houses

with raised wooden floors, sliding panels and bad plumbing; and because they were the *Herrenvolk* they built their shrine and recorded the names of their soldiers and followed the complicated rituals of ceremonies. In the building of their shrines they possessed wonderful taste. The *iigis,* those extraordinary slender spars above the roof-beam, were perfectly spaced. The pure unpolished wood shone down from the rafters. The Chinese masons had removed all the inscriptions and some soldiers had scribbled on the walls, but even then the interior of the shrine was quiet and gave the impression of serenity.

In this setting the shrine was perfect, but a quarter of a mile away, on the same sunbaked plain and exactly facing the shrine, there was something that resembled a marble cinema. It was white and glaring. It was ugly. It was in the worst possible taste, and half the roof had been blown up by the Chinese when they re-entered the city. But it was so massive, so ringed round with heavy stone walls and so deeply built into the soil that it remained; though the steps leading up to the heavy marble gateway were dented by the explosion and the interior was filled with rubble, it still retained an oddly menacing power. You wondered why the Chinese should have gone to the trouble of blowing up a German cinema. You half expected to see posters announcing some perfectly idiotic film, and you were surprised when you went inside and saw only some whitewashed walls, and here and there some black ashes, soft as powder, at the foot of the walls. The walls were scribbled over, and sometimes the black ashes trembled in the wind that came through the doorway and through the roof. You asked the interpreter what the devil had happened, and he answered simply: "It was amazing. On top of the roof there was a great marble square like an immense tombstone on which the Japanese

engraved characters which meant: 'For the glory of the Japanese soldiers who died for the Emperor'. Well, they were dead. They were in this thing you call a cinema—about ten thousand of them, in little wooden whitewashed boxes. The first day we came here, we blew the roof sky-high and we took the bones out and burnt them, and now we're sorry we did not use them for fertilisers!"

XXXI STUDENTS

THEIR cheeks were red, they looked well-fed and they all wore the same blue uniform, which is hardly a uniform, for it is the same costume as the peasants wear in the fields—blue cap, blue coat, blue trousers and sandals. They did not all look superbly intelligent, but they did look superbly confident. You saw them walking in the grounds, usually in couples, and you were surprised by the redness of their northern faces, and their determined steps. They swung their arms easily, they spoke politely but without deference, and very few of them had any money. Yet their clothes were not patched and torn, and there were no evident signs of poverty. You very rarely saw a student carrying books—under his arm were newspapers, mimeographed lecture notes, home-made notebooks.

I spoke to one of them who would graduate shortly, and then go out to one of the villages. He did not know which village, or what Border Area he would be sent to—it might be Shantung or somewhere in the south. His brothers had been at Yenching University; he showed me their photographs; they looked exactly like him, a tall well-built northerner with a thin long face which suggested

some Cantonese blood. Yenching was the only University which remained in Pekin and fought the Japanese; nearly all the students who remained in Pekin University remained for reasons which may be complex but suggest that they were prepared to suffer the indignity of living under the Japanese. Yenching's independent attitude was due partly to the tradition which it owes to Dr. Leighton Stuart and partly to its isolation—like Tsinghua University, which marched *en bloc* to its long exile in Kunming, it is far outside the city wall and near the western hills, where the guerrillas were hiding. In 1939 this boy's brothers had fled to the Chin-Cha-Chi area. They had gone to the front, one had been wounded, of another nothing was known and the third was now a colonel in the army. He had heard from them from time to time: letters arrived by the most mysterious means. His father tried to keep him inside Pekin. He stayed on until the spring of 1941. He was then seventeen. There were terrible scenes. His father threatened to hang himself if his last remaining son left the house; his mother wept; there were rumours that his father was working for the Japanese; worse still, the news of his favourite brother's disappearance had to be kept from the father. He said all this very quietly, without straining for any effect whatsoever, and you could almost see the small middle-class court-yard in Pekin with the paint flaking off the eaves, its bicycles, its hanging bird-cage and spirit-screen and kittens tied on strings. There were the old family servants, but everything was becoming shoddy with age, the house was falling into disrepair, prices were controlled but it became harder and harder to live, and the Japanese were always there, squat little men who stood at sentry-post with gleaming bayonets and nose-masks over their faces in the hot, dusty summers. He stood it as long as he could, then one night slipped over the wall

and hid in a friend's house. The next day he was already in the western hills, but it was nearly a fortnight before he reached Fu-ping, then the administrative and army centre of the Communists against the Japanese. "I have something to thank the American missionaries for," he said. "They taught us to think independently. In Yenching we were not Communists, but we felt that they were honestly fighting for China. I only spent a little time there, but I learnt that much."

I thought of his story again some weeks later when I read in the newspaper that 70-year-old Dr. Leighton Stuart, President of Yenching University, which he had founded, had been appointed Ambassador to China.

Nearly all the students at Hua-pei might have told similar stories. There was the girl who had been a nurse in the battle-lines, another who had dug tunnels, there were the students who had flown up secretly from Chungking to go through a training period and act later as interpreters. There was the student from Chungking who complained that there was not enough to bite on, since nearly everyone was in favour of Mao Tse-tung's New Democracy, with the result that you could have no more heated arguments with your fellow students. He laughed at the students who said they were Communists: "It's very fashionable, but we don't need Communists—we want democracy and village education. That will be the real revolution. And anyway Marx is out of date." There were the children from the match-factory (someone had reported that the Communists used slave labour and young children in their factories) who threw themselves after work into the task of learning to read and write with complete self-abandonment, and twice a week would take two hours off to discuss gravely the political questions of the hour. It was rather absurd—the newspapers in north

China were as propagandist as those in the south, and their young minds were untrained in discovering what was truth and what was propaganda. They hated the Kuomintang with an almost passionless white-cold hatred. It was not their fault that they were being taught to be political animals so young, but this was one of the few occasions when I felt that the Communists were behaving dangerously; yet, when you compared their childish speeches with those elsewhere in China, it was difficult not to believe that at least as much good as harm was being done. Youth was coming into its own: in the same night-schools there were old peasants and workmen learning with their grandchildren: the old were as enthusiastic as the young. It was a world in the making, and you felt that it was a world which would endure.

XXXII KU YUAN AND THE WOODCUTS

He was well-built and though he was a Cantonese, he looked like a northerner, and there was a curious gentleness in his expression which suggested that he had recently been ill. He spoke very little, and then always to the point, and he lived like Ai Ching, the poet, and Ting Ling, the novelist, in one of those countless Japanese houses which are strewn around Kalgan, with *tatamis* and small sofas and low walls. The house was small, but not uncomfortable. There was a hedge outside, and you felt that it might be a suburban house in the centre of England except that it had shrunk inexplicably. He was Ku Yuan, the most famous of their woodcutters and almost certainly the best. He was thirty-five, but looked twenty-four.

From time to time he picked up the woodcutting instruments which resembled scalpels; he could not take his hands away from them, and when we were talking he would make little incisions on the wooden table. Most of his instruments were home-made; two had been sent from America recently, but bore German trade-marks. He was grateful for them, but he was even more grateful for the promise of some books on modern painting and design in Europe and America. "We've been cut off from books from abroad for so long—— When I started, I was influenced by Katte Kolowitz and then by Grosz. My peasants were always starving or being beaten to death. I drew them with enormous thick-veined hands which hung down limply. I drew them cowering and afraid, or being raped and beaten, or they were being tortured. It was true that these things were happening, but I left out the other truth—that in the war against the Japanese and in the war for production, they were living strenuously and in a sense happily. So now most of my drawings are not about their miseries but about their strenuous efforts to make a new world. Why should not my drawings glow with health when the world around me is glowing with health?"

He had been trained by Ma Ta and Woo Ch'a, two much older woodcutters, at the Lu Hsun Academy, but he had trained himself long before and soon excelled his masters. He had a natural talent, a natural itch for digging into wood and making patterns out of it. Recently he had made designs to replace the gate-gods which appear on all doors on New Year's Day. His gate-gods were not the heroes of warrior epics; they were simple peasants, surrounded by their children and flocks. He found among the peasants a delight in making silhouettes and pasting them on paper windows. He employed their technique and

drew designs like theirs, with effortless mastery of the method. He knew almost nothing about ancient Chinese art, but said that woodcutting in China was still in swaddling bands, it would grow up when they had learned more from the west and from their own past. It was the easiest art for the peasants to master, since it needed little more than a gravel and some wood. His woodcuttings were everywhere: you saw them in shops, in villages, in peasants' huts, in official residences. Oddly enough, two collections of his drawings were being printed in Pekin. He was a little sorry they were being printed, because the reproductions were never so good as the originals taken from the woodblock. You looked through the prints, and all of them had that glowing life—there were farm-carts loaded with wheat, peasants learning to read, there were scenes in village squares, there were the new and prouder gate-gods and drawings of old peasants and children and soldiers and boys and girls. They were clean-cut and he possessed an immense and satisfying sense of space, and afterwards you remembered them; but you remembered, too, the nervous beautiful hand on the table which was continually digging out new patterns from the wood.

XXXIII AI CHING AND THE TRUMPETS

They said in the south that he was a man of about forty, very rugged and bearded, who took no care of his clothes and wandered over the country singing his poems and never so happy as when talking with some other wandering peasant. It was all wrong; he was nothing like this, and yet it was easy to understand from his poetry how the legend arose. The poetry is robust, hard, filled with

a kind of sunlit energy and defiance, and sometimes the hardness would disappear and in its place there was pure lyric feeling, a quietness like that which descends on ancient Chinese poetry. He was famous for the long poems on soldiers fighting against the Japanese—there was *The Trumpeter* and *The Man Who Died a Second Time,* and there were a host of others, which reflected the roughness and energy of the times. It was easy to imagine him tall and bearded, stalking over the northern plains, a Chinese Whitman who cared only for the sufferings of the people.

In a sense the legend was true—he *was* the Chinese Whitman, and he had sung of the sufferings and deaths of the soldiers more than any other poet in China, and far better. He did not look like Whitman. He looked like a young scholar, perhaps twenty-five, with a brown sensitive mobile face, a fine forehead and immense eyes. Like almost everyone else in Kalgan he wore a thin blue cotton suit, and a blue cotton cap. The hair was long and blue-black; in immobility the lips seemed carved from red sandstone; he had almost no gestures, and carried himself with a natural grave dignity, though he often grinned like a schoolboy. You would say at first glance that he was a scholar, at second glance you were certain he was unlike any scholar you had ever seen.

I saw him nearly every day I was at Kalgan, and tried sometimes to discover the springs of his poetry, since he alone of all Chinese poets has sung perfectly of the war. I asked him whether he had seen war at close quarters, and he said he had seen it very rarely and then only accidentally when he was on some propaganda work near the front line. But he had seen drought and famine and the insides of prisons, and he had seen the new China growing up in the north; he had lived for years with the

villagers and soldiers, and watched their sudden fury against the Japanese. "The best thing was the people. That was why I wanted to live among them, encouraging them to write and editing their magazines and writing for them—above all *for them*. We were cut off from the world. There was the blockade in the south, there was the Japanese blockade in the east, hardly anything came to us from Russia. And in a way it was good, for the writers had no other source than the people." Like others, he would say the word for people—*lao pai hsing*—with a special tenderness.

Most of the time during the war he had been at Yenan, living very quietly in a cave dug out of the loess mountain cliffs. There he had been an elected representative on the Shen-Kan-Ning Border Region Congress—hardly anything else in life had pleased him so much as his election as representative of a county in this parliament. He had written a lot, but not as much as he had hoped to write. "You are so damnably busy there, there were so few administrators, and sometimes I thought I would never be able to write poetry again—you get snowed under with details. The details are important—they have to be done because they concern the life of the people—but for the poet it is especially difficult: this is one of the problems that remain unsolved. You need quiet for poetry. We were not living in quiet—we were living with annihilation campaigns directed all round us."

One morning, when he seemed less occupied than usual, I asked him for details of his life, saying that I had once written a short essay on him from the material that was available, but most of it was hearsay. He was not very worried about his biography, and seemed to think it was almost of no importance at all. "Not very much—just prison and painting a little, and working."

"Why did they send you to prison?"

"I was arrested in the French Concession, and they kept me in prison for nearly three years—dangerous thoughts, I suppose." And then a little later: "I was born in 1910 in Chinghua *hsien* in Chekiang. My father was a small landlord, who had graduated from a middle school and had a little modern education. I was born on the farm. I learned by heart all the classical things that were taught in the schools near the farm, then when I was fifteen I went to a middle school at Chinghua. After that, I thought I wanted to be a doctor and studied medicine for half a year. It was no good—I was not made to be a doctor, and by this time I had decided I wanted to be a painter. My parents did not want me to go abroad—they knew nothing of other countries, and besides it was a time when the Chinese still had little love for foreigners. It seemed monstrous to go and study painting in Paris. But still I went, and they sent me a little money, and I earned some more by drawing designs for Chinese porcelain in France. Yet I depended on my father's money, and in the end, when he sent an ultimatum—no more money if you stay abroad—I returned, very reluctantly. There were other reasons for returning. 1931 was the year of the Mukden incident and the beginning of the Japanese invasion. The French seemed to be in sympathy with the Japanese, and you felt as you walked around the streets of Paris that the Chinese were despised. But I had learned something—I knew how to paint a little, I had been to Arles, I had seen the paintings of van Gogh, I had read a great deal, chiefly in French. I was beginning to think I might be a poet and began to write seriously for the first time on the boat coming back to China—they were immature poems, and all of them are lost now.

"I left Marseilles on January 28th, 1932. I remember

the date, because it was also the date of the Shanghai incident—the Japanese attacked Shanghai. The fighting had ended by the time I returned home. I went straight to my native home in Chekiang, and found that my parents still wanted me to become a high official; gradually, when they discovered that I had no intention of becoming an official, they began to hate me. In May I left them and went to Shanghai—it was useless to go on in the small village. In Shanghai I met Lu Hsun. I had studied the social revolution in France, and was becoming more and more a socialist, so I studied and taught in a small study group called—for all these study groups had that kind of name—the *Chun Ti* study group. *Chun* means spring and *Ti* means earth, and it meant 'the awakening of the earth in spring'. It was a rather mild group, but our thoughts were evidently 'dangerous thoughts'. It was banned on July 12th, and I was arrested.

"I had written a very little poetry in Paris, and more on the boat, but now in the prison in the French Concession in Shanghai I began to write in earnest. The French, mercifully, were not so strict as the Chinese. There was just enough food, and I could smuggle the poems out of the prison, and through friends we could get good food sometimes and magazines from outside. I was released in October, 1935.

"I had met Lu Hsun once before going to prison, and now I decided if it was humanly possible to be a professional writer. I gave up painting altogether, and plunged into poetry and literary magazines. It was a time of peace, though the peace was soon to be broken, and literary magazines were growing up like mushrooms. Now and then they would be suspended, or they would change their names. It was a time of awakening. I stayed most

of the time in Shanghai, and developed a close friendship with Ho Feng, the theorist, and Tien Chien, the poet, and then at the beginning of the war, in July, 1937, I went to Hankow and later I became a teacher in the National Revolutionary University in Shansi—this was an eminently respectable University, in spite of its name, sponsored by Marshal Yen Hsi-shan, the war-lord of Shansi.

"Meanwhile the war went on, and Marshal Yen Hsi-shan was not entirely the 'model governor' he pretends to be. Two months later I went to Sian and organised resistance groups against the Japanese. It was a time when the writers became organisers. They were propagandists—they had to be. They had to tell the people what they were fighting for, and never to stop fighting till the Japanese were out of China. Afterwards I returned to Hankow and then to Kweilin, where for a while I edited the literary page of a newspaper.

"We were terribly unsettled in those days—always moving about. I stayed in Kweilin for a year, then I went to Hunan and taught Chinese in a middle school for another year. The school was very liberal; I was happy there. But gradually it became known that the school had liberal tendencies, and the Government became alarmed and closed up the school. The times were dangerous. We thought of what we should do, and decided to go to Chungking—the safest places are the large cities, where you can hide more easily. There, for a while, in Chungking I taught in the Yu Tsai School founded by Tao Hsin-tzu,* an American-returned student who is now a leading member of the Democratic League; and there in Chungking I met the great novelist Mao Tun.

"In January, 1941, there occurred the New Fourth Army Incident, when this Communist Army south of the

* Died July, 1946.

Yangtse was ordered to move north of the Yangtse. It obeyed the order, but was surrounded by Kuomintang troops and 4,000 were killed. It was in this civil war fought in the midst of the war against Japan that General Yeh was captured—he was imprisoned for five years, and died, as you know, this year in an aeroplane crash not far from Yenan. Like hundreds of thousands of others, I began to wonder whether the Kuomintang was prepared to fight to the utmost against the Japanese. Partly with the help of General Chou En-lai, and partly with the help of one of my students who had become an officer in Marshal Yen Hsi-shan's army, I went to Yenan. The journey was dangerous. I was disguised as a staff-officer in Yen Hsi-shan's army. There were six or seven of us, and one famous writer was disguised as our batman. We had the right papers, but we didn't look very much like soldiers, and the worst moment came when one of the patrols discovered that we were carrying wooden tooth-picks—officers in Yen Hsi-shan's army were presumably supposed to carry silver ones. We passed altogether forty-seven sentries. In March we arrived in Yenan. Since then I seem to have lived continually in an atmosphere of annihilation campaigns."

He had shown no bitterness at all during this long account until he came to the end; he said "annihilation campaigns" like a rat-trap closing. He said nothing more for a long while.

"It was not so bad—we got down to the people at last. This was the important thing. You know, for years we had lived in cities. We wrote about the people, but we did not know the people. In Shensi we had time to learn the folk-songs of the people, I began to realise we were all too much influenced by western literature. We read Mayakovsky and the French poets, but they were not Chinese, and

they were badly translated. They told us a great deal, but they did not tell us the thing we wanted to know most. Years before, I read Mayakovsky's *Cloud in Trousers* in a French translation. It was a tremendous shock. It opened up immense possibilities, but most of us copied the method too literally, and we did not realise that he was speaking about a particular Russian situation. Our own situation in China had little enough to correspond with the situation in Russia in 1916. When I was younger, I read Byron, Heine, Pushkin, Goethe, Whitman, Verhaeren—I translated *La Cité, La Plaine, Les Douze Mois*—Mayakovsky, Essenin, a hundred others. Some of the influences remain, particularly Verhaeren, but what I want in my poetry is that the greatest influence of all should be the Chinese people.

"I believe that art and the revolution must go together; they can never be separated. We are political animals, and sometimes we must write as political animals. *If the revolution fails, the art will fail, but in as far as is possible the artist must be a revolutionary. As a revolutionary and as an artist he must represent his times. Therefore he must write propaganda. One writes propaganda for the same reason that the Christian painters painted Madonnas —I write about the people and a particular social system, because I have faith in them. It is possible for us to have the same faith in democracy as the people in the medieval Church had for their God.*

"Now more than ever I realise that we were wrong in our beginnings. The movement of May 4th went too far. It was too iconoclastic. We destroyed the images of the past entirely; now we must return to them. We thought we must write something entirely new, not knowing that the tradition remains, and we can never escape entirely from the tradition. We forgot that there must be *harmonie*."

When he said *"harmonie"* his face lit up; one derived the impression that all problems were resolved in this mysterious word, a word which possesses an almost Chinese significance and force. "It seems to me that in the future our poetry will change, and all our culture will change with our poetry. It will change in three directions. We shall take the best, the most revolutionary poems of the past, we shall take the folk-songs of the people, we shall continue to take influences from the west. We need simpler tunes—tunes the people can sing. We do not need any longer the delicate fragile emotions of the intellectuals.

"So far in our new poetry we have not always succeeded —the best things we have produced in north China during the blockade were not poems, but *reportages* and woodcuts. These sprung from necessity. There had to be *reportages,* because the soldiers and the people wanted pictures. We did produce some illustrated books with photographs, but they were rarely good. We had expert cameramen, but we rarely had good materials. And so it was with everything—the men were good, but we were being besieged and the materials were bad, unless we captured them from the Japanese.

"We had at least one good poet—Tien Ch'ien. He has a more vigorous style than Mayakovsky's, a succession of rousing hammer-beats, and he has a tremendous gift for stating things simply. He is still very young, and unfortunately became famous too early, before he had matured. Occasionally he wrote love poems, but most of his poems were concerned with the war and problems of production —they were two very real things when we were fighting. Most of us at first tried to write as we had written before: it took a long time to realise what were the most important things. But Tien Ch'ien saw them at once, and it is only recently that he has taken a real interest in folk-songs.

They say he is a propaganda poet. It is true. And why not? We had to win the war, and there were exactly two fundamental things—production, which meant our own survival, and our continual attacks against the Japanese. But sometimes Tien Ch'ien, using this new hammer-beat language he had invented, made terrible mistakes—he distorted Chinese phrases, and where the tone of a character should be soft, he made it hard, and where there might have been easily remembered rhythms, he deliberately distorted the sounds into hammer-beats; and you cannot remember his poems easily.

"Thinking about it now, it seems that we did what we could, and on the whole we were successful. We subordinated everything—our lives, our customs, our traditions—to winning the war. It had to be. We had everything to gain by organisation. No one starved, and no one was without weapons. *We relied on ourselves, and we knew that China would have to rely on herself for victory.* And gradually, over all those long years, we built up in the north a system of democracy which can never fail, because it represents so intimately the demands of the peasants, for after all we are a nation of peasants and will always be a nation of peasants, and this is what is important."

He had spoken very quietly, rarely using gestures, and sometimes his eyes would wander to the glass cases placed against the wall where there were buddha-heads and black-stained wooden goddesses which had come from abandoned temples. He had cut himself away from the past; now he was busy attempting to find the past again. For him most of the old Chinese poets I admired were worse than useless: they had no social message, no sense of political responsibility. There remained a few poets—Tu Fu and Po Chu-I were among them—who spoke of the sufferings and aspirations of the people. This was what was important.

China was going through her revolution now, and until the revolution was accomplished, there was neither time nor energy left for sheer beauty. I said that at first I was shocked in the Communist areas by the drabness of the people, who all wore cotton-cloth and seemed so like each other. Gradually I noticed that the cotton uniform possessed vast advantages: you no longer looked at clothes—you looked at faces, and each face was different. It no longer became important that a girl should wear a coloured skirt, or paint her face. You saw the real face undisguised, and somehow, with all your attention concentrated on the face, she was displayed more nakedly than if she wore the close-fitting gowns of the Pekin girls.

"And besides," he went on, "what else can we wear? We have our uniforms, as you call them, though they are not uniforms; but if we wear the clothes you see in Pekin, how can we go among the peasants, how can we expect the peasants to tolerate us? It is important that we should be as like the peasants as possible. This is not a disguise. We take to it naturally. The body is not important, but the face tells everything—— We must learn once again to look directly at people's faces."

It seemed simple then to understand the strength of these people of northern China who had fought against the Japanese without aid from outside so long that they had developed a kind of instinctive pattern of behaviour, which depended only on fighting and production. In Kalgan you do not feel hemmed in as you do in Yenan: you felt that the future was there, and unconsciously they had mapped out a future so self-reliant that it seemed youthful in comparison with anything I had seen in the south. In the north they were young and full of promise; in the south they were old men, who had long ago lost their youthful defiance. In Kalgan, in Yenan, in a hundred

places in north China men had deep roots, for all were peasants or workers, all were brethren. There were no vast riches, even though a co-operative could pay a dividend of 70% in four months, and there was no poverty. In this world a man like Ai Ching could live at ease.

He spoke of many other things, of writers and the difficulties of printing, of his extraordinarily beautiful wife and children, of the horrors of living in a house which had been built by the Japanese and was cluttered with *tatamis* and sliding panels and labour-saving devices and little wooden platforms where you placed a solitary bowl of flowers if you were Japanese; but he preferred to have flowers all round him. He lived quietly and methodically. He was still editing magazines, still teaching, still writing, and sometimes he would wander off among the peasants and live with them, for fear that literature would claim him too ardently. His whole wealth consisted of his bed, some furniture, a chest littered with manuscripts, and a Japanese sword. He had killed the dēmon that desires money, and had only one belief: that at this period in China's history it was necessary to serve the people.

That evening, when it was quiet over Kalgan, we worked on a new translation of one of his finest poems. Hardly any sounds came from the streets, though somewhere around two o'clock in the morning some soldiers passed through on their way to the Nankao Pass in the south; they looked like ghosts, and the moonlight caught the thin blue blades of their bayonets. Meanwhile, in the poem, Ai Ching had stated the poet's desire for China:

Snow Falls on China

Snow falls on the Chinese land:
Cold blockades China. . . .

The wind like an old woman with many
grievances
Closely follows behind
And stretches out her claws,
Tugs at clothes.
Her words are as old as the earth,
Complaining, never ceasing.

From the forests
Driving their carts
Come the farmers of China,
Wearing their fur caps——
Where do they want to go?

I tell you, I too
Am a descendant of farmers,
Like you, my face
Is etched with pain,
So deeply do I know
Those months, those years of labour,
Knowing how people live in the plains,
Passing hard days.

No, I am not happier than you.
—Lying in the river of time,
Often the tides of distress
Have entirely overwhelmed me.
In exile and in prison cells
I spent my most precious youth.
My life
Like yours
Is haggard.

Snow falls on the Chinese land:
Cold blockades China. . . .

Along the rivers of a snowy night
A small oil-flame drifts slowly
In a ragged boat with a black sail.
Facing the lamp and hanging her head,
Who sits there?

O you
Snot-haired and dirty-faced young woman,
Is this your house,
A warm and happy nest and cave,
Burnt out by the invader?
On such a night as this
You lost your husband's protection.
In terror of death you were teased
Utterly
By the enemy's bayonets.

Aiee, on so cold a night
Numerous
Old mothers
Crouch in homes not theirs,
Like strangers,
Not knowing
Where tomorrow's wheels will take them.
The roads of China
Are as rugged as theirs.

Snow falls on the Chinese land;
Cold blockades China.

Throughout the snowy pasture in the long night
Are lands bitten by the beacons of war.
Numerous men of tillage

Live in the village of Absolute Despair.
The cattle they fed are robbed.
The fat rice-fields plundered.
Over the hungry earth,
Facing the dark sky,
They hold out shivering hands,
Asking for succour.

O pain and distress of China,
Endless like the snowy night.

Snow falls on the Chinese land;
Cold blockades China.

O China,
On this lampless night,
Can my weak lines
Give you a little warmth?

XXXIV TING LING AND THE BLIND STORY-TELLERS

I HAD been wanting to see Ting Ling ever since I came to China, for of all the novelists since Lu Hsun she had seemed the best. She could describe lovers, the morning mists, the trials and strains of the young Chinese before the Japanese war with an immediacy which gave her writing a curious similarity with D. H. Lawrence. It was all there. She saw cleanly; and her lovers were as real as her landscapes. Yet during the whole course of the war we heard almost nothing about her, and some wondered

whether she was dead. It was rumoured that she had published three or four books in Chungking under assumed names, that she had died in battle, that she had become the Red Commissar for something or other and lived in a state of free love. I sent a note round to say that I would like to see her. We had mutual friends. She came. I did not interview her; she interviewed me on all the writers I knew in the south.

She is hardly more than four feet six inches tall, but when she is sitting down she gives an extraordinary impression of height. She is Hunanese, and like most Hunanese almost expressionless until she smiles, and there is a special sweetness about the smiles of those who are born in Hunan. She spoke in a low voice, very feminine, without gestures, wearing the usual blue cotton coat and blue baggy trousers; but once again you noticed, in this country where clothes have always possessed such mysterious significance that even now clothes are emblems of rank, that the blue cotton sets off the face perfectly; and you are conscious only of face, hands, the curve of the shoulders. She looked thirty, but she is over forty. She had fine teeth, and her black hair was drawn straight back from the brow; you realised that she must have been an extraordinarily attractive girl, and that she is herself the heroine of most of her novels.

She spoke of the odd fate which her work has received abroad. A few of her short stories were published in translation by Edgar Snow, a play was translated into English and performed in India. *The Mother* had been translated into Japanese during the occupation, she had read the book again recently, it did not please her, she wanted to revise it, making it the first of a trilogy dealing with the women of North China. She was proudest of her plays, which had been performed close to the front lines, and of one

play especially called *Wang Hsiang T'ai Pan,* which translated literally means: Seeing one's Native Home from beside the Execution Grounds, and refers to the ghosts who rise after their execution by the Japanese and gaze into the distance. She had published one book in Chungking during the war under an assumed name. She had never been a Red Commissar, and she was happily married and had two children. She had spent all her time during the war editing magazines, organising drama groups and writing *reportages.*

"We didn't have time for other things—there were so few writers, and we had to write for the people. I wrote a lot, of course; but most of it somehow got lost during our journeys, and it doesn't matter. I wrote several plays, and in some of them I found myself attempting desperately to try to understand the Japanese character. There was a play called *Ho-nei-yi-lang,* which is simply a transliteration of a Japanese soldier's name, and there was another called *The Meeting Place of Lovers,* which was largely about death and the war. I wrote some short stories called *Living in Shatsung,* which was the name of a perfectly imaginary place in northern Shensi, and another called *Scenes in Northern Shensi,* but best of all were the *reportages.*

"We had to write for the people, because we were living in a time of revolution, and nothing else was important. Most of my early writings are valueless. Those stories of the emotional crises of young women in Shanghai—they have little enough meaning for me now. What is important is to get the people on paper, to find out how they really behave, how they think and act and love one another, and above all how they fight, and to do this authentically, not relying on the imagination—to do it with real feeling and understanding. You cannot write

about the peasants unless you have lived with them for years, and because China consists so largely of peasants, you cannot write about China at all unless you have lived with the peasants.

"When a writer sits down to write, he does not say: 'I shall write for the people or not for the people.' His characters, the people he describes, depend on his daily life, on his observation, on his love for them. He can write, if he pleases, about young women suffering emotional and spiritual crises in Shanghai, or about the habits of the cultured scholars, but the peasants will not read them or listen to them. We had to develop an understanding of them, to go down among them, to suffer with them; and their crises are not like the crises in Shanghai. They are made of simpler stuff, but how difficult to render them on paper!

"My early works were a kind of continual *Sorrows of Werther*. Sometimes, too, I wrote of the peasants, but reading these things now I realise how often I misunderstood them. Lu Hsun spoke of their faults, their lack of education, their pitiful obedience to feudal laws. It was true at the time. It is not true now. They are maturing incredibly quickly, and they know now that they have rights and duties, and that they will never again suffer under the old feudal forces. They are making a world good enough to live in. They are learning to read—every village has its reading classes—and they are learning to write. I spent as much time as I could trying to find young writers among the peasants. They were not many, but they were good.

"What I wrote about the peasants in the past lacks *life*. I had to begin to think how to write all over again. In 1942 Mao Tse-tung made a speech calling upon the writers to study the peasants, to move among them and to be as

much at their service as the government administrators. I was doing this long before his speech, but I still did not understand them, I was still partly the young woman who wrote about love affairs in Shanghai. I discovered some things. I discovered that style was not important, that it was dangerous to invent a style, that one should write in such a way that all writing is a mirror of the people. I tried to break my old style and create a new style, but even that was no good—style, too, must come from the people, from the rhythms and sounds of the voices you hear round you.

"If you write for the moment, it is called propaganda, it cannot last long, but even though you call it propaganda, it has its own validity. It is created by the moment. Best of all would be to have time to compose a historical novel, trying to bring together all the impressions of the time, all the moments, all the heroism and suffering of the people. But how? It is not yet time—we are still struggling.

"There are other things we learned: that nearly all past Chinese literature was divorced from the people. *The Book of Odes* contains songs sung by the people, but we are no longer the same people we were two thousand five hundred years ago; we are changed; our feelings have changed; conditions have changed; and only the scholars can read and understand the old terminology. When we write the new *Book of Odes,* it will be utterly different from anything that has gone before. We must go back to the songs of the people."

Wandering among the mountains of Shensi, disappearing for months on end in remote villages, or organising dramatic groups, she had listened to the songs of the people and studied them until she could almost identify herself with the old singers. They had a naked, original strength, often satirical, occasionally brutal, but there at least she

had heard the real voice of China. Her face lit up when she spoke of the blind singers in the villages—this was real, this at least was the word she had been listening for.

"And they were not what we expected at all—they were infinitely better than we expected. The songs were unstudied, natural, springing from the earth and from their lives. In my family no one could sing a peasant song—perhaps there was no need. But in northern Shensi, everyone, everyone without exception, could sing these songs. There were love-songs and labourers' songs and there were songs cursing the officials and scholars, and they were mostly anonymous songs. Also, there are story-tellers, who are also singers, and I think most of us learned more from these old blind story-tellers than we had learned from anything we ever read.

"In every small district there were these story-tellers. They were professional story-tellers, supported by the villages. Their stories are sung to music. They have a *pipa,* a kind of guitar with four strings, and they have other instruments which they perform all at the same time. There is a kind of flat board laced to the leg beneath the knees—they can tap on it with their fingers to give an accompaniment to the *pipa,* or else they can beat on it with a bronze clapper, or else they have a sounding board above the knee to beat on. They sing without gestures, wholly absorbed in their song; and the song is very long, usually an interminable story of heroes in the past, of kings and the downfall of dynasties, of amazing battles and great deaths.

"The people knew the stories by heart, and sometimes, but very occasionally, these blind musicians used to invent new stories. There were hundreds of stories, and the people knew them all, and never tired of listening to them. The story-tellers would move from one family or one

village to another—new ones were constantly coming in. We invited these story-tellers to Yenan. We took down their stories, and studied them, and we started to ask them to tell stories about the resistance of the peasants to the Japanese. It was propaganda, if you like, but the resistance had already led to innumerable good stories. We have sent writers to live with them and learn from them. We have sent other writers to get them to sing the new stories. They were men with fantastic memories, and fantastic imaginations. We found after a while that they could invent stories prodigiously—as much as ten stories in half a year. Then they went back to their villages.

"Now, all over Shensi, there are these story-tellers. In the evening, when the farmers have returned from the fields, they listen to the blind old men with the bronze clappers and the *pipas* telling stories of the old heroes like Chu-ko Liang or of the young soldiers who fought in tunnels and blew up the Japanese with land-mines. It is almost the same world—there is not so very great a distance separating the past and the present. The stories are told in dialect; they belong to the people; they are continually growing and budding, and forming new stories. We feel now that the art of the story-teller has never been richer than in the places we have liberated from the Japanese, and the writers from the coast-ports are humble before the achievements of the blind men who wander from village to village. There, at last, is the intimacy between author and audience which we lack, the direct communication, the splendour of the legends which belong to the present time.

"We still need to study the West, but in the end we found the best story-tellers among our own people."

I saw her many times again in Kalgan, striding down the road or coming to the stuffy hotel to discuss the

importance of India or the places where the most beautiful women were born or what had happened to the friends she had not seen for nearly ten years, but the impression that remains is of a woman who wanted to spend the rest of her life among the peasants, and perhaps even wishing that she was a blind musician wandering among the tented hills of Shensi. She hated to discuss politics, which was a pity; she had a fine clear-cut mind. She spoke of the *lao pai hsing** as Ai Ching spoke of them, conscious of their enduring greatness and of all men's ignorance about them until the war made it possible for people to see and write about them clearly for the first time. They were there. She was one of them, born on a small river in northwestern Hunan.

"There are four hundred and fifty million of them," she said. "It is time we learned about them."

XXXV · THE COLONEL

THEY said that Executive Headquarters in Peiping was full of sleeping American colonels, and the great green-tiled building, built by Rockefeller and once known as the Pekin Union Medical College, where they lived in the hope that they could bring peace to China, was known as the Temple of the Ten Thousand Sleeping Colonels. It was not a satirical title. It was said gently, and almost with sorrow, for the Chinese knew better than most that peace would come in the Chinese way, which is a long way, and that nothing is ever solved in China completely. The Americans had come with their eyes open. They knew that peace depended on factors over which neither they

*The old hundred names, *i.e.*, the people.

nor the Chinese had any control—peace depended on Russia, on the atomic bomb, on the rise of democracy in the world and on a revolution in men's hearts. And not one of these elements could be calculated exactly.

It was delightful to wander around the Pekin Union Medical College, where the maternity wards were occupied with colonels sitting at their desks—it was said that no one had ever seen anyone in the place with a rank less than colonel. There was the smell of antiseptics in the air. You were surprised that the colonels did not wear red rubber gloves. The Kuomintang and the Communists had their own offices in the building, sometimes side by side, and you were surprised that they did not attack one another with scalpels and forceps. Perhaps they did. I saw one dead body being removed from the place, but I never found out whether it was a dyspeptic Communist, an enraged Kuomintang member or a colonel with heart disease. It was a good place to settle quarrels in.

But the quarrel went on. All over north and south China there were small groups of field-teams, with Americans, Kuomintang and Communists attempting to put an end to the sporadic fights that broke out through the spring and summer. They were surrounded by secretaries and interpreters. They had power to stop the fighting whenever it occurred. In theory they could settle the fighting before it broke out, but in practice the fighting went on, for their powers were never defined and they were powerless to prevent people killing each other, if they were determined to kill each other. Thirty-five of these teams were sent out into the field, equipped with radios and codes and jeeps which would take them to the battle-lines. They did a great deal of good, and prevented a considerable number of deaths; but they could not punish the guilty, they possessed no prisons, no system of dispensing

justice, and their purpose was largely to examine the evidence and despatch complaints. It was probably all that could be done, and often it was done magnificently.

It was absorbingly interesting to watch the field-teams at work. The work was new. No one had any previous experience of settling civil wars, and nearly everyone was bewildered by his responsibilities. There was an immense, an overwhelming amount of paper work. The marble floors of the Pekin Union Medical College were filled with American colonels, Chinese girl secretaries and young Chinese officers. There was a delusive air of efficiency, and considerable comfort; but the quarrel went on, the L.S.T.s were still sending Kuomintang troops northward, the Kuomintang possessed by this time a considerable number of American aeroplanes originally lend-leased to fight the Japanese and now used according to the Communists in civil war against themselves. Something was wrong.

In Kalgan there was an American colonel in charge of No. 5 Field Team. He was the best of fine fellows, but he was old and three-quarters deaf. The Kuomintang and Communist members of the team were both lieutenant-generals. The American taught them "five hundred", rummy and American slang. "Stubborn, that's what they are!" he kept on saying. "Stubborn as the English and Americans—you can't make 'em see reason. Well, I've taught them 'five hundred' and they get on like a couple of kids. They don't hate each other. Why should they hate each other? They're Chinese. No Chinese wants to fight Chinese. I've got a brother-in-law. He's English—took charge of the Shredded Wheat Factory in Welwyn Garden City. That's what they are—stubborn! Stubborn as hell!"

He had never been to China before, and it all looked curiously unlike anything he had imagined. He talked

with a Scots burr he had inherited from his grandfather, and he said he knew there would be a third war, an atomic war, which would be the end of all wars and probably of all life on this planet, but there was nothing he could do about it. "Stubborn—that's what people are! It's just a lot of hooey. The Communists are no more Communist than I am. Then why the hell do they fight? They're just stubborn as hell."

There was a photograph of his daughter, his son-in-law and his grandchild mounted on green paper on the wall; there were sofas, a refrigerator, a radio, an electric clock, a disarming atmosphere of comfort and good works. The Communist general was always grinning; the Kuomintang general was grinning. They played cards, and sometimes radio messages would come in, and the American colonel would whisper: "Well, they're getting on like a couple of kids, aren't they?" Kuomintang aeroplanes had buzzed Kalgan. "We sent the protest in immediately—damned silly thing to buzz the town. And then there's General Nieh, who is in charge of this area on the Communist side. He's all right. I get on with him. Play tennis with him sometimes. It's all right—got to tell them though not to kill each other. Stopped a lot of fights in my time. Go out with an American flag, and find out what's happening and pack them home. Stubborn! That's what it is—stubborn as hell!"

I didn't like it at first, but later I came to see that it was probably the only way in which things could be done. He had no great understanding of the Chinese, but he had seen enough war to realise that it never led anywhere. He knew perhaps almost nothing of the subterranean forces at work in China, but he knew human nature and he knew that if he could get the generals to play cards there would be a little more understanding between them.

XXXVI THE OLD REVOLUTIONARIES, I

He was as ugly as sin, and he was President of Hua-pei University, which had come from Fu-ping and Yenan to Kalgan when the Japanese were overthrown. He looked like a Hapsburg, with an enormous jutting chin and a narrow red-veined nose, and he was so small that he would pass easily in a crowd; yet he smiled delightfully, and though he was dogmatic in his opinions, and self-assured when he addressed the University students, it was all part of a necessary disguise. The vice-president of the University, Chow Yang, was a famous critic. The President was not famous, he had written very little, and you realised that he had been made President because he possessed excellent administrative ability.

We talked about the University, which has fine buildings left by the Japanese and seven or eight hundred students. I admired the students immensely. They were usually tall and well-built, they wore their blue cotton uniforms with a swagger and they looked as though they were not afraid of anything. Many of them had come from the Kuomintang areas in the south, either on foot or on pony-back, often in disguise to pass the frontier posts, or else they had flown from Chungking. Nearly a hundred of them had flown secretly, with the help of the American army, in three plane-loads to Kalgan in April. There they joined the school of English language—the Communists had very few students who knew English well—and this was a godsend, for now they could build up their cadres of interpreters and translators. In general the Communists were bad propagandists, and seemed not to care very much what happened in other parts of the world, and they had paid almost no attention to the necessity of telling the outside world what

they were doing. There was every day a quarter of an hour of Morse broadcast from Yenan, and this was about all—in Yenan they knew the broadcasts were received in the office of *Amerasia* in America, and also in the Philippines, but they had no idea whether they were received elsewhere. Now for the first time they were attempting to train interpreters.

He was a man of about fifty, and he had good reason to be pleased with the progress of his University. At Fuping there were sometimes three thousand students scattered over neighbouring villages. Many, far too many of their students had been killed in the war against the Japanese. There were four faculties—political science, education, literature and western languages. In the last seven years they had trained over ten thousand students. Sometimes the courses were deliberately made as short as possible. The first semester was usually given over to political training based on Mao Tse-tung's New Democracy, social science and the history of social development, and there were courses in contemporary Chinese history, the development of the liberated areas and methods of thinking. Marxism was not taught in these courses, and from what I saw of their books the teaching was somewhat akin to old-fashioned English liberalism. There were no technical colleges in the University—there was a science school and a technical college outside the town. This was a University for a purpose—to train as quickly as possible administrators and government officials, propaganda workers in the army and what they called *cadres*—trained and efficient boys and girls who would go among the peasants and organise them and find out what the peasants wanted.

I have never seen so many students looking so well-fed; all had red cheeks, and enjoyed life. Though all, boys

and girls, wore blue cotton coats, blue cotton trousers, and blue cotton peaked caps, there was no impression of uniformity. There were an infinite number of gradations in the blue colour of their clothes, and seeing them all in the same uniform, you were not aware of oddities of dress and had time to look clear into their sunburnt faces. The students were expected not to marry while they were attending the University, but many of them were married. Nor were they asked to pay anything. Everything, food, paper, pencils, underwear, shoes, clothes, beds, blankets, all these were provided by the Government, and the Government guaranteed them jobs after graduation. They would get little money from their jobs, but they would be provided with everything they needed. They seemed, and were, students who were dedicated to serve the peasants.

The President complained a little of the students who had flocked in from Pekin and Tientsin after the downfall of the Japanese. Their morale was not high; they were grossly ignorant, and sometimes did not know who was the President of the United States or when the Boxer Rebellion took place. These students had an average age of about twenty, yet their mental age was considerably less, The time of the Japanese occupation had been sheer loss to them.

"And the worst of it is that their handwriting is mixed up with Japanese," he went on, "and when they first came they were always bowing tiresomely and sucking in the air between their teeth, exactly like the Japanese. Mostly they came from the senior middle schools, and very often we found they were the sons and daughters of traitors. They came here because they wanted to get away from the atmosphere of treachery which ran through Pekin and Tientsin for eight years. They had heard about our work, they knew we would look after them, but at first

we wondered whether we could do anything with such amazingly poor material. It took three or four months for them to shake down, and now they have shaken down, and some of our best students are among them.

"They find it difficult, of course, to communicate with their parents, but there are ways and means, and we even give them the stamps. They have their baths and haircuts free, and they don't seem to worry very much about money, though we give them in money each month the equivalent of eight catties of millet. This pays for the small things they want, which the University doesn't provide. But under the present system we find that we save enormous sums of money by this kind of University co-operative, and enormous amounts of time. We still lack text-books, and have to produce most of our text-books on mimeographing machines. But the printing-presses are beginning to turn out books on good paper, and we are no longer living in the time of short six-month courses. The average length of time the students will now spend in the University is three years, but sometimes even now we shall take them from the school and send them out into the field before they have graduated.

"My feeling is that they are enjoying themselves. The sense of dedication is there, and they know that within a few years or months they will be given responsible positions. We have far more jobs open for them than we have students. The University was founded in 1939—it is the oldest University in the liberated areas, for even Yenan University came afterwards. They like the patterns of behaviour which we try to inculcate in them—a pattern based on the utmost simplicity. They are to have government positions, but they must remain close to the peasants and the farmers, and they must live simply like the peasants and farmers. They cannot be corrupt, for in this

area there are precious few advantages to be derived from money; and they are given heavy responsibilities so early that they will probably never fight for power. You fight for power only if you have never had it, and it brings advantages; but here it brings no advantages, only such vast responsibilities that they would quail before them. Ultimately, the important thing is that they learn here to live simply, to be honest and to serve the people as teachers or administrators or whatever work is given to them.

"They can choose their own work. There are six courses in the Department of Literature. Literature itself has most, but there are courses in drama, woodcutting and painting, music, journalism and dancing. Very few are now taking woodcutting or dancing, but there will be more later. A good number are taking drama—there is theory of drama, history of drama, methods of acting, and how to write plays. They write like mad, and perform their own plays. In Kalgan there are only six theatres but they are filled every night. The good actors have tremendous followings, though the plays are mostly propaganda plays. What we want them to do is to write their own plays, act their own plays, know everything about the drama from top to bottom; the best actors come mostly from this University."

I had seen a series of plays given by the University students the previous night. They had an almost professional competence, but I had been struck most of all by the way in which the students acted peasants. There were two boys of seventeen or eighteen, and they took the parts of old peasants perfectly; they knew all the manners and gestures; they spoke as I have seen peasants speak; they tapped their long silver-stemmed pipes on the soles of their rice-straw sandals, and instead of looking seventeen or eighteen, they looked sixty. There was a Japanese officer, and this too was played perfectly; a man in khaki uniform,

with a club-foot and an insolent ragged contempt of the Chinese peasants who surrounded him on all sides, speaking Chinese with a Japanese accent, turning up the cuffs of his coat to strike the peasants and behaving with studied and bestial idiocy. But the effect was fantastic—it was a real Japanese, no longer acting, a man with a tooth-brush moustache and a small perplexed mind. The Chinese peasants had run rings round him, they had almost laughed in his face, but every gesture gave the impression of accurate authenticity—this was the Japanese they had studied at close quarters for eight years. I remember, too, a Mongolian dance by two girls dressed in red, green and yellow silk; the dance was hieratic and essentially buddhist, and more a dance of weaving hands and slow-paced movements to the tune of a *pipa* than an invocation to any new age which the Communists were about to usher in; but how perfectly they had danced, how expressionless and yet full of expression were those silent faces and those gently accomplished young bodies! They did not sing. They wove, with pointing hands and with the folds of their silk gowns, a pattern of adoration across the stage.

It was this kind of thing that was so impressive, the way the curtain would draw back and you would see, here and there in the north, the permanent things revealed so simply and effortlessly that you remembered the greatness of the people who are as great as their land. The colours of mountains, the small Kansu ponies riding towards the distant gates between the mountains, the Great Wall itself, the odd depths which were sometimes surreptitiously displayed in the faces of the people, the white scars of the river beds and the curves of men's shoulders—these were permanent, and would remain long after the New Democracy of Mao Tse-tung was forgotten; but perhaps they were more splendid here, because the

New Democracy, which has nothing to do with Communism, gave men a fervour and delight in life absent in all the other parts of China where I have been.

There were other plays, and the President discussed them professionally; he knew the actors, their private lives, their difficulties—even the difficulty of finding lipstick and rouge for their faces. The ugly face became less ugly after a while: you noticed the eyes, and forgot the large stained teeth and the Hapsburg chin. He was small and quiet, and spoke sometimes as though he was reading from a catalogue; but often the catalogue disappeared, and his intense pride in the University shone forth. This was not a University where scholars could study at their leisure, though there is a place for such Universities in China. It was a University of the people, for the people, by the people, and those broad northern faces had looked astonishingly pleasant and hopeful.

It was then, I think, that someone told me that the President had taken part in the Long March. I have spoken of the Long March before, and met at least twenty people who had taken part in it, and in Kalgan as elsewhere it was noticeable how the Long Marchers were treated with deep respect. The President was delighted to have an opportunity of talking about it. His memory was fading. He could not remember all of it, and besides, in the early stages, he had been suffering from malaria—he remembered the early nightmare journeys only through the scorching fever of malaria. There were no doctors. He had taken part in the Long March because there was no other alternative, and as soon as he came out of the hospital he was placed in one of the two companies of sick men which staggered behind the fighters. It was not a glorious position, but at least these two companies had fought bravely at times.

"What I remember now are certain incidents—the crossing of the Tatu Bridge, quick sudden engagements with the enemy, our sufferings and our poverty. I remember particularly the weather, how it rained during the first two months in Kiangsi and Hunan, and how foggy it was in Kweichow. We started in October, which was the worst time for starting a long journey. When we came to Kwangsi, it was already hot and we abandoned our padded clothes by the roadside. When we passed through the Man-tzu territories of Szechuan, it was windy; and in May the snow had never been deeper on the *Ta Hsueh San*—the Great Snow Mountain. It is a very slow slope, but nothing could be more difficult to cross—there was almost no air there. We would pass the night in ruined temples, and we could not sleep because we were all crowded together and our clothing was wet through. We went on. The advance guard could not get through to the top. We camped that night half-way up, and then when we did reach the top of the mountain at dawn, it *hailed.* It was the last thing we expected—thick lumps of hail as large as your finger-nail.

"Men died on the top of the mountain. They would be standing next to you and talking to you, and then their faces took on a sudden frozen look, they swayed and they were dead; and what was extraordinary was that some of the strongest men died on the mountain. In the morning we raced down to the valley."

As he said this his eyes gleamed, and you realised then how these men, who have fought the Japanese for so long, still dreamed of the Long March, which was so fantastic and unbelievable a thing that it assumed the colours of legend. You could hardly believe you had taken part in it. And gradually, as I collected stories from them about the march, it became evident that there were twenty

thousand different stories, for every man had seen the march through his own emotions. General Peng Teh-huei had told me about the crossing of the Tatu Bridge; Chu Teh had said a few words; the President and others were to tell me more, but though the stories could easily be reconciled, I was struck with the essential differences. Each man had remained himself, and saw things which no others had seen.

"And after we crossed the Great Snow Mountain things grew better. We came to the grasslands—it was all plain and swamp, the earth soft, with no trees and the grass about a foot high. There were bogs where men died, but not all of us travelled through the centre of the grasslands —others travelled in long columns along the edge of the grasslands, and that was better. We got milk and butter from the tribesmen, and most of us survived; and later on we came to the Yi tribespeople.

"It was the strangest of all journeys. We had seen Kweiyang in the distance, at a time when the Generalissimo was staying there. Some of us saw Kunming, but we had no time to stay there or capture it—we had to cross the Golden Sand River as quickly as possible to avoid the enemy. The Kuomintang knew we intended to cross the river and took all the ferry-boats to the other side. We made a forced march in three columns across the plain till we reached the river, trying to find a place where we could get through, and we sent another column walking backwards and forwards between Kunming and the river to put the enemy off the scent. The middle column was the first to reach the river—they walked 140 *li* in one day. We found a single boat tethered to the south side of the river, and some of the soldiers boarded it, disguised as civilians. The enemy were in no hurry, they thought we were still far away. On the other

side of the river our soldiers, disguised as civilians, found a tax officer. They explained they were Kuomintang troops in disguise and wanted the boats sent hurriedly to the south bank, and they wanted fuel and food. The tax-inspector agreed with alacrity, and invited them to dinner with the local landlords. It was not a trap—the tax-inspector really believed we were Kuomintang troops, and while the dinner went on, and our own soldiers cursed the Reds, our troops were being ferried over.

"It was dusk when they crossed the river. They encamped on the bank, and the next day at dawn they climbed a mountain. By this time the landlords and the tax-inspector were beginning to doubt we were really Kuomintang troops; they fired a few ineffective shots at us, and we returned their fire.

"On top of the mountain there was a plain. We marched along the plain for about thirty *li* and came to Tungchow, which was guarded by two battalions of Kuomintang troops. We found them sleeping, with their arms scattered all round them—we took all their weapons, and some good machine-guns. It was the easiest of all our victories, and there we waited, while the rest of the Red Army, numbering perhaps 60,000, came up with us—some of them had crossed the river at further points down south.

"Things were getting more and more curious, for we had had to fight stern battles with them in the past, but now they seemed to have lost heart. A column of Szechuanese soldiers found our hiding-place and attacked, but what was surprising was that they had lost all vestiges of *morale*, they shouted at us and screamed at us, but they weren't very effective soldiers and soon surrendered all their equipment. It was as though the gods were beginning to favour our side. Later, we destroyed the boats and fortified our position. We needed a rest. There was a long journey

ahead. At one time General Hsueh Yueh's army was a day's march behind us; now we learned that the Kuomintang forces were at least a month's journey behind us. This heartened us. We took a long rest. We still had the Tatu River to cross.

"The Tatu River was not easy to cross. General Shih Tai-k'ai had been surrounded there during the Taiping Rebellion, his forces cut up and none left to survive. He lost his armies in a place close to the bridge where we crossed. We made forced marches to the river-bank, but found no boats there. One Szechuanese Kuomintang officer had come to the south side of the river by boat to see his father-in-law. We captured the boat. About nineteen soldiers crossed over in it, and on the other side of the river there were two Kuomintang battalions waiting for us. These nineteen soldiers in turn captured more boats and returned, but the river was desperately rapid and dangerous. Yet we got two companies across unhurt, and these defeated many of the Kuomintang soldiers on the north bank.

"We heard that the enemy was delighted with their success at trapping us at the defiles of the river. They never calculated worse. We had two columns marching along both sides of the river. There were no good roads—just stepping-stones and paths scratched out of the rock, so that we were for ever jumping from rock to rock or putting down planks between them. Then in the end, we captured the bridge from both sides, we cut down the Kuomintang defenders and the two columns met together at last."

And then as we rose for dinner, he smiled his quiet Hapsburg smile and said: "I can't remember all of it, but it was as simple as that."

XXXVII THE OLD REVOLUTIONARIES, II

THERE was excellent beer, and on the label there was printed in large florid characters: Five Star Brand Lager Beer Shinohin Brewery Pekin. It was Japanese beer, but it tasted in those hot days in summer like good English beer, and we kept drinking it till four o'clock in the morning. The building was in the old city, belonged to the Field Team and had once belonged to a Japanese general; the sofas were small, and were delicately patterned: the tall Communist general found himself imprisoned within the arm-rests. He looked like a peasant, with a close-cropped skull which shone like gold in the light of the electric lamps; he possessed an infectious laugh; it was only rarely that he showed any signs of bitterness. He had been a supply officer during the Long March. He had taken an important part in the campaign called the Hundred Regiments Campaign which Chu Teh had organised, all over north China, against the Japanese, and you derived the impression that he preferred fighting or farming to being doing paper work in the Field Team.

I asked him whether there was any real hope that the war might be stopped. He grinned and poured out another glass of beer. "We're doing our best," he said. "No one wants this war. The *lao pai hsing* don't want the war. We're all so desperately tired of war, but we'll fight for democracy against dictatorship. There are good people in the Kuomintang, but they don't want democracy apparently. We fought against the dictatorship of the Japanese under conditions of blockade from the Kuomintang. We were surrounded with 'ramparts of copper and iron'. We are bound to be bitter against them,

and they are bound to want to conserve their power. Best of all would be to go back to the agreements already made, call a National Assembly and have a real democratic China—as democratic as America or England."

But he could see little hope for the moment. The balance was weighted for war. American intervention was probably insufficient: the issues at stake were so great that it needed the intervention of Soviet Russia and Britain, yet they had kept silent and aloof. Both would be immeasurably affected by the decisions made in China. The Americans were mediators, but they were also technically and factually at the service of the Nationalist Government, and the Nationalist Government was no longer representative of the people. "It's all dictatorship—a one-man government—and we are so tired and sick of it." He was violent about the corruption in the south and asked whether I had seen any in the north. I said I had been there too little a time to be sure, but it seemed in the highest degree unlikely that anyone on the Communist side was corrupt. There were no advantages that money could bring in the northern areas. I said I had read some reports written and broadcast by the Communists about Kalgan, saying that there were no ricksha-pullers, no prostitutes, no beggars in the capital of the Chin-Cha-Chi area. It was untrue. I had seen two prostitutes, one beggar and three ricksha-pullers. He laughed.

"But you don't know what it was like before the war. This was a Japanese city—there were prostitutes everywhere. How many have you seen?"

"Two."

"When?"

"At four o'clock this morning."

"What the devil were you doing in the streets at four o'clock in the morning?"

"I had been talking with the Kuomintang general. We came back by car. They were standing on a street corner. I can't think who else would be standing at street corners at four o'clock in the morning."

He agreed that some of the Communist claims were exaggerated, though for some reason (it may have been a perfectly good reason) he was inclined to think that the beggars were Kuomintang agents in disguise. "Half the beggars in China are in the secret service. We swept the beggars off the streets and put them into trade, and two months later they started coming back again from the south." A little later he said: "There's nothing worse than these exaggerated claims for the Communist areas. We're doing the job well, we are organising administrations and factories, but we haven't got enough trained men. In the war everyone was fighting, and fighting with inadequate equipment. In the peace we find we have inadequate numbers of trained men."

It was getting late. He had discussed the ways in which the war might be brought to an end—a *coup d'état,* manifestations by the students everywhere, the retirement of the leaders of both sides from the scene, a prolongation of the truce. For some reason all of these seemed unlikely to succeed. We were waiting for the miracle; and now, as often, the miracle was simply democracy. He was bitter about the Kuomintang as the Kuomintang general had been bitter about the Communists the previous night. Was there any way in which the bitterness could be bridged? He shook his head. "It's a question of waiting and hoping —that's all."

We had come down to that. There seemed in those days to be no hope at all—and within ten hours the truce would end, and the war would be aflame all over China. It was two o'clock in the morning, and the truce would end at

midday on the last day in June. What would happen? There might be general offensives everywhere, with the Kuomintang capturing many large towns and the Communists growing stronger and stronger in the villages. There could be no victory. China would be split, not horizontally or vertically, but into urban and rural areas, according to the pattern already visible in Shantung, where the Kuomintang possessed Tsingtao and Tsinan and the Communists claimed to possess all the surrounding areas. This was not civil war like the war in Spain; it resembled more than anything else the kind of undeclared war which took place in Germany after 1918 between the villages and the towns, and for some of the same reasons. A kind of utter despair settled on us, and it was then that I asked him to talk about the Long March. In this world, where everything seemed to be failing, where no one was thinking clear-headedly, where the stakes were so large that nearly everyone was overwhelmed by them, the epic journey remained. It was perhaps the centre-pole round which one could think a little more clearly about the future.

It was half-past two, and we had been talking since nine o'clock—two of the interpreters were asleep, and it would be necessary to hurry for fear that the third would fall asleep, too. But the general looked fresh and gleaming, the bronze skull caught the light and the immensely mobile peasant face, which possessed craft and intelligence and an extraordinary youthfulness for one so old—he was forty, and he had been fighting continuously since he was nineteen—seemed to grow into even greater life as he spoke of the past. The magic worked. It was a very potent magic. It was only a moment before he was once more a strippling youth just out of military college.

"It happened very quickly. There was the march to the north, a tremendous democratic fervour in the country

and then suddenly, so it seemed to us, there was an end to it—the Generalissimo came out on the side of the reaction, and there was the inevitable and necessary uprising at Nanchang.

"We fought stubbornly, even though we were small in numbers, because we knew that we could save the country from the reaction if we succeeded in our aim. I was a supply officer. That meant that ammunition, clothing, medicines, everything had somehow to be obtained, listed and placed in the proper hands. There are things I remember well, but some of it is forgotten—when you have been fighting for so long, all the wars and battles seem to have the same colour. I remember a forced march near the Gold Sand River, on the boundary of Yunnan and Szechuan. We sent a small army to the river. The Kuomintang thought we would fight for passage at the place where this army came, but suddenly we moved away secretly and marched for two days and one night without stopping towards another crossing. It was the hardest thing we ever did. We were worn out. We dared not fail. We had no time to eat, and we had to eat as we walked, without rest, taking our drinking water from the river. We marched two or three hundred *li*, and crossed at the new crossing.

"I remember many other things, but most of all I remember the crossing of the Tatu Bridge. We had defeated several armies after crossing the Gold Sand River, we had climbed over mountains and then we saw in the distance the defiles of the Tatu. The current was unbelievably swift. We came to a town called An-shun-ch'ang. There we found an old man who told us frankly that the crossing was impossible, and a great Taiping general had lost all his forces there. We knew nothing of this war. We asked him for details, and he said that

General Shih Ta-kai's wife had given birth to a child, his soldiers were allowed to rest and feast for two days, and then it was too late for the crossing—they were encircled and defeated. So we thanked the old man, telling him there was no danger we should rest and feast for two days, and we had no wives on the Long March.

"At Tatu River we could capture only three boats. We tried to make a bridge, but failed. With the three boats we sent over about 500 men, and then two of the boats overturned and it was decided not to send any more. Along both sides of the river we approached Liutingchiao, the Bridge Made by Liu, the only bridge lying on the frontier of Sikong and Szechuan. The Kuomintang guarded the bridge with one regiment of soldiers. We selected about a hundred young soldiers to try to get across the iron bridge, and at the same time, to distract their attention, we sent bursts of machine-gun fire across the river. Some of our soldiers fell a hundred feet below into the river—there was no help for them, and there was nothing we could do to save them. In the end we wiped out the regiment. At that time those in command were Lin Piao, who is now in Manchuria, Liu Po-ch'eng, and General Nieh.

"There was a great deal of fighting in north-western Szechuan. We fought rivers and we fought marshes and we fought mountains—it was more difficult to fight nature than to fight men. On the Great Snow Mountain the snow never melts; there is so little air that you can hardly breathe. Lin Piao's* heart was bad. They carried him half-way up the mountain, and then they had to rest, and it was only much later that he reached the summit. The tribespeople here told us that we should cross before noon, because in the afternoons there are high winds and the air

* In 1946 Commander-in-Chief of the New Democratic Army in Manchuria.

pressure becomes mysteriously changeful. After crossing the Great Snow Mountain we found that the troops of Hu Tso-nan, which had come down from Shensi and Hunan, were waiting for us. We defeated them, and then came to the grasslands—we walked for a whole week through mud and grass. The mud-holes were terrible—we had to rely on the tribespeople to lead the way. There were no houses, no villages, where we could pass the night, but sometimes we came upon ancient forests—they were so ancient that beneath the trees there were layer upon layer of fallen leaves; and these were drier than the grasslands, and better than any house. We had eaten up all our foodstuffs by this time, and we were starving. The tribespeople raised cattle, but hid them when they saw us approaching. We ate hides, searched for mushrooms, anything.

"This was the worst time, for we felt lost, we did not know the language of the tribespeople, the terrain failed us, and many of us died. There was only the small straggling columns on the grass plains.

"It all happened a long time ago, and many who took part in it are dead. We lost heavily during the journey. There were originally four commanders of the four armies which took part in the march—Lin Piao, Liu Po-ch'eng, Peng Teh-huei, Lo Ping-huei and Tung Chen-tang. Lin Piao and Peng Teh-huei were the best. Liu Po-ch'eng later became Chief-of-Staff, but Tung Chen-tang died some years ago and Lo Ping-huei died recently. Soon, of all that vast army, there will be only a few leaders left, for you could not live through those hardships and come through them unharmed. We were an army without a uniform, without marks of rank, living on the land, wandering through nine provinces, always fighting—has it ever happened before that an army has made such a journey?"

There was no need to answer him, for only Cortes and the Torguts had travelled over such vast spaces and with such great difficulty surrounded by enemies. The young general had changed during the course of the conversation. Tired now, he looked magnificent, the smile disappeared, the small mouth was set in a firm line and the close-shaven head began to look for the first time commanding and even forbidding. We went out at last into the court-yard where on the wall there was written in blood-red the Chinese character for "happiness". The stars glittered. Somewhere in the great house we could hear a Morse tapper. The war was still going on.

XXXVIII TUNNELS AND LAND-MINES

He was tall and swarthy, and though he wore impeccable uniform and had spent long periods during the war against the Japanese in the headquarters of the Eighth Route Army at Fuping, he looked what he was—a fighter. I knew him as Colonel Ma. It was probably his real name, for he looked as though he had Mohammedan blood and Ma is a common name for the descendants of the old Mohammedan invaders. He smiled easily; he spoke English nearly perfectly; he liked nothing better than telling stories, and above all he liked telling stories about land-mines and tunnels. There were even moments when it seemed as though Colonel Ma regarded the whole eight-year war as a rather delightful pastime in hoodwinking the Japanese by burrowing under them or away from them, or blowing them up nastily and efficiently. And he would roar with laughter at some particularly nasty and efficient trickery. Writing this now, I remember

him smiling mysteriously, gazing at the ceiling, absorbed in a kind of conjuring trick, effortlessly filling the room with the vision of the plains of north China where the farmers of the small scattered villages were vigorously plotting against the three-pronged columns of the Japanese annihilation campaigns, and doing this so superbly that you almost forgot the legendary terror—burn all, kill all, loot all.

He had a quiet voice, well modulated, and he would speak very slowly as he described the sudden merciless attacks just before dawn, or the enemy's amazing delight in murder, and their methods of rape. These things occurred. Their memory could not be stamped out. Hatred for the Japanese still burned among these people, who were so accustomed to long years of hatred that there was almost a vacuum in their lives now that the Japanese had gone. Sometimes we would go outside the city and see the fortresses on the distant hills, and he would talk of the time when the Japanese began to build fortresses in every village and on every mountain in great rings and circles which became smaller and smaller as they advanced towards the centre.

"It was all they could do," he said. "They had so many enemies that they had to exterminate us to survive, and they could only exterminate us by drawing a vast circle of blockhouses round us, and then narrowing towards the centre. They were desperately afraid. They had the railroads and the towns, but every village and every field belonged to us, and in every village and every field there were traps laid for them. The traps were everywhere—inside houses, along the roads, under railroad lines, in trees, in stones. There came a time when they would not even dare to enter our houses, even after they had murdered everyone in the village they could lay their hands on—

they would send puppet troops into the houses instead. The floors were dangerous, the walls were dangerous, the brick bed was dangerous and the roof was dangerous. A stone on the floor might explode if you stepped on it, there might be a false wall and suddenly a brick would move and they would be killed by revolver fire from a man hiding behind the wall. The brick bed was dangerous, and they began to learn to regard brick beds with horror—people could hide there, and it was very easy to put explosives there. If they climbed on the roof, all the tiles might explode in their faces.

"They didn't like it, but they had to take it. They preferred not to march or ride along the roads: you would see them going through flooded fields or along the slopes of the mountains—it was safer there. Or better still they rode their horses along river-beds. But all places were dangerous for them; there were land-mines in rivers, and even on the mountains an unsuspected stone might explode and kill them.

"In this area, Chin-Cha-Chi, we had a land-mine hero called Li Yun. He thought about land-mines all day and all night. He was puzzled by one thing. You could put a land-mine on the road and blow up a Japanese motor-car, but often the Japanese inside the motor-car survived. He kept thinking about it. How the devil to kill the Japanese in the car? In the end he decided to put a small land-mine in the road, and two large ones on each side of the road which exploded when the Japanese came out of the car.

"Land-mines were the easiest things to make. You could make them out of anything. We had the nitre and saltpetre, and we had stones in abundance. In the end half of our land-mines were simply stones, bored out, with a cardboard or glass tube like a cartridge inserted in them,

and connected by a lanyard or a trip-wire to some hiding-place where a soldier was watching, or just simply left there to explode when anything touched it. The Japanese might come into a peasant house and pick up some turnips—the turnips would explode; or they would lift up the wooden cover over the stove, and the cover would explode. When the Japanese occupied a village in the early days they always did two things—they held a mass meeting of the villagers in the village square, and they took over the best houses; so we put land-mines under the village square and arranged that under the beds of the best houses there should be more land-mines. After that they did not hold meetings in the village square, and they did not take over the best houses.

"We made their lives miserable with land-mines. We were very successful with them, and when we captured their reports, we found that they were frightened to the marrow by every stone and every blade of grass in north China. We would use land-mines in combination with ambush—very effective, and the wounds caused by splinters of stone are much worse than shrapnel. They tried to use land-mines against us, but it wasn't very effective—we were rarely in the places where their land-mines were. But still they were powerful, they could build blockhouses and try to narrow us down.

"This is where the tunnels came in. They came in gradually, and we learned how to make them and use them only after bitter experience. Generally speaking, there were two kinds of tunnel—a tunnel built from village to village underneath the fields for the purpose of saving the lives of the villagers when the Japanese attacked, and a tunnel built deliberately for fighting in. The tunnels did not necessarily run directly between the villages. There were side-turnings, blank alleys, and in the fighting tunnels

all kinds of tricks were employed. We used land-mines in the tunnels, too. And some of the most bitter fighting in the war in north China took place six or seven feet underneath the earth.

"We had to excavate the tunnels secretly; we would take the earth away to the foot of a mountain and bury it again. When it was raining, we would take it to the fields and sprinkle it there. We had to be careful—there must be no tell-tale marks of earth, and they must never know whether we had tunnels or not. It was a game of nerves—we wanted them to believe that there were tunnels everywhere. It was true in the later stages of the war, but not in the beginning.

"There were all kinds of problems, and we solved them very, very gradually. The entrance to a tunnel might be anywhere—under a bed, behind a false wall, anywhere, and always it was carefully concealed, so that if you went into the room you wouldn't find it in less than ten minutes. There was a time when half the population of Chin-Cha-Chi was digging tunnels, and the other half was trying to hide the earth. Why not? It had to be done. It was the only way we could safeguard our lives. There were some beautiful tricks. A tunnel might begin in the side of the well. Excellent. We would drop down on to a wooden board, and make our way through the tunnel, but if the Japanese followed us, we would arrange that the wooden board would tip up—the Japanese would fall into the well-water, and just beneath the surface of the water there were bayonets and sharp-pointed sticks. This worked beautifully. Or else the entrance to the tunnel would be beneath the *k'ang,* and when the Japanese entered the house they would find an old lady sitting on the *k'ang.* She could communicate with the people in the tunnel below by pulling on a string concealed in the bed-covers. She could

tell them when the Japanese had come, and when they were gone, and many other things about them.

"We had trouble with ventilation, of course. It can be very damp and dark in the tunnels—not pleasant. Sometimes the tunnel would pass beneath the wall of a house: then we could arrange an air-let. Or else it would pass near an old well, and we could arrange another air-let. But it was not always easy. Sometimes, too, we arranged that the tunnels should utilise old wells. Suddenly, where the tunnel passed through the well, there would be a drop of twenty or thirty feet. For ourselves we put boards over the place where the tunnel passed through the well, but the boards were removed if the Japanese were following. Then, too, sometimes the tunnel would narrow down till it was so small that only one man could worm his way through: at such places, if the Japanese were following, we put mill-stones bored through with a hole in the centre: through the hole we could fire at them. In the darkness they never knew what hit them. But generally they did not follow us through the tunnels—they contented themselves with digging outside the village, hoping to cut through the tunnel-lines. It wasn't much use to them. The tunnels were complicated affairs. If they cut in one place, we still had branch tunnels going to other places. The only way they could stop the peasants using tunnels would have been to dig a vast circular trench round the village and put sentries at all the tunnel exits. It wouldn't have worked. They didn't have enough sentries.

"The earth is firm in central Hopei, and this is where most of the best tunnels were—it is not loess, as in Yenan. We didn't need roof supports: six or seven feet under the earth the tunnels were firm, and there was no danger of the roof falling in. We would arrange little sidings, where we could rest or ambush the Japanese or pass one another.

There are a lot of dead Japanese in these tunnels still—it saves the trouble of burying them. But mostly they did not get into the tunnels—if they tried to, they were blown up with land-mines the moment they dropped into the tunnel entrance. Sometimes they used poison gas. It was very effective at first, until we learned to put up cotton quilted blankets soaked with water inside the tunnels—it kept the gas out. We were fighting on our own middens, and against all tricks, but the tunnel was the best trick we had; the Japanese would come and occupy a village, but the villagers had fled. The Three Alls—Burn All, Kill All, Loot All—were excellent in theory, but we hid the grain and we hid ourselves, and we could always rebuild our houses afterwards.

"We hid the grain in the tunnels or in specially prepared pits. They rarely found it; and the grain keeps perfectly if you take certain precautions. They wanted grain badly —it was the best kind of plunder, and there was a time when they thought they could starve us out. But the peasants for centuries have learned to hide grain from the tax-inspectors. They usually arranged that their annual annihilation campaigns would take place in the autumn, when we were harvesting. They could destroy some of the crops, but they could not destroy all of it, and they could always kill a few people. They killed a lot of old women, who could not run fast enough. They were stupid people, and they did not understand us, and we were better organised than they were."

He had spoken of the tunnels and the land-mines as though nothing could be more pleasant than outwitting the Japanese; but evidently it was not all pleasant. There were tragedies, too. A tunnel with hundreds of people in it would be blown up with dynamite, or poison gas would be thrown in at the right time and the right place. There

are ghost villages where no one has survived. There are areas where they had succeeded in destroying every living thing. And there were minor tragedies, more poignant because they concerned individual people, which he told sadly and slowly, as though he could reproduce with his slow, deliberate voice the tension of the days of the past.

"It was two years ago, somewhere in central Hopei. We had come to a small village, with our six or seven bodyguards. We heard that the Japanese were about to attack a village about ten *li* to the north, but we were desperately weary and slept without adequate precautions, though some of the bodyguards remained awake. The Japanese did attack the village ten *li* to the north, but they also attacked us. They came by forced marches suddenly from the south, and they reached us just before dawn. This was their favourite manœuvre, for just before dawn is the time when it is most difficult to resist them.

"My bodyguard woke me up and told me the Japanese were already in the main street of the village. There was just time to throw our documents and ammunition down the tunnel-well, and clamber in. They knew we were there. They had spies—mostly traitors, and besides they had passed through this village only a little while before. Some Japanese soldiers climbed up on the roof of a neighbouring house and fired down on us, but by that time we were struggling through the entrance of the tunnel, ten or twelve of us, and the documents were still in the well, and we had no time to hide the entrance. They came into the room. A puppet soldier jumped down the well when he saw the documents. We wounded him in the thigh, but not seriously—he climbed up again, bringing some of the documents with him. It didn't matter so much—they were in code.

"The house where we were staying belonged to an old woman. They went to her, and asked her who we were. She said there were no soldiers there. They answered by hacking off one of the fingers of her left hand with a meat-axe, and then asked her again. She gave the same answer five times, and they cut off all five fingers. What made things so difficult was that we were accompanying a general who was bringing with him his wife and a six-months-old girl-child. We were all making our way through the tunnel. It was muddy, the tunnel was small, and we crawled forward on hands and knees. We could hear the Japs just above our heads digging trenches. They dug more than ten trenches, and when they came to a tunnel they poured in poison gas. The general and his wife were slightly poisoned, and the baby began crying. This was dangerous. You couldn't ordinarily hear the sounds of a baby crying six or seven feet underground, but the sound might be heard near an air-let. The Japanese were determined to get us. We could hear the horses above us, and sometimes we heard their officers—that meant we were near an air-let. And then suddenly the baby stopped crying. We went on. It was so dark and so miserable, and the air was full of the smell of poison gas, which had soaked into our clothes. We had wet cloths over our mouths, and we were terribly cramped. We stayed in the tunnel thirteen hours, always moving about. Then we heard them go away, and climbed out. It was night. We discovered then, not before, that the general's wife had smothered the baby to death for fear that the Japanese would hear her cries. She said nothing about the killing to the general. It was just there—the dead child, covered with mud, the face blue, and the woman was weeping."

XXXIX THE DESERT AND THE SOWN

THE aeroplane left Kalgan one burning summer day and headed for Mongolia. Once again there were the bronze mountains in the sun, no clouds, the white scars of the unflowing rivers and here and there on the mountain slopes were small temples among green trees. No day could have been brighter and nothing could have been smoother than the flight of the aeroplane. The pilot said they were going to Suiyuan, the most northerly of the provinces of China proper, in the direction of the Ordos plains; but when you looked for the plains you saw only the sweep of the mountains going on for ever, till at last you came to a region of yellow-blue earth which seemed even at that height to be barren and uninhabited. We were already in Suiyuan. From the air you saw the railway line, the green fields and nothing else.

Chi-ning is a small walled town on the railway to Pailingmiao. It stands in the middle of a vast plain, dominated by the immense power-station and water-tower of white concrete—you can see only the walls, the station, the tower and the railway station, and for the first time it occurs to you that all over Asia there are towns like this along all the railway lines. There had been no need to make an air-strip; the plain was enough, a plain where there are few roads, no animals, the only signs that people once passed by here were the hillocks of stone erected for the dead. I hoped to see camels, but none came. The air was pure, and the sky was touched with the green grass, which went on for ever. In the distance were the faint blue mountains low on the horizon. The town was in the hands of the Communists; the first Field Team had come here.

It was comfortable there, lying under the shadow of the

plane with a great wolf-hound which had appeared from nowhere, or talking to a girl student who had walked from Yenan two weeks before, a bad journey, without compass or maps, always a little afraid of straying into enemy territory. She had come with three or four others. It had rained often. Kweihua, the capital of the province, was in Kuomintang hands. There was still the possibility that Kuomintang troops might attack Chi-ling. Even while we were there two P-38s came high over the city and circled round. One of the Americans in the field team shook his fist at them. "Jesus, they look as though they're going to strafe our plane." He ducked when they came lower. They were Kuomintang planes out on a mission of observation. It had happened before, it would probably happen many times again, and always there were complaints sent into Executive Headquarters. "The goddam bitches," he said, and the smile broadened on his face when they disappeared at last in the direction of Kweihua.

It was poor country, growing only sheep-grass and *yu mei,* and it was deathly still during that long morning of full sunlight. The sky was as wide as it is in the south of Hungary. A few herdsmen came prodding their cows in the direction of the town, a jeep came charging across the plain, growing from pin-point to full size in a few seconds, for distances are illusory in these immense plains, and then our aeroplane came from the direction of Tatung, its sharp lines cutting the soft landscape and seeming to be necessary to bring the landscape to life. The girl said: "In winter it is desperately cold. There is snow on the ground, but the skies will clear." And you wondered whether the Field Team would still be there, and what fortunes of war there were for this small brown city on the plains.*

* Chi-ning was captured by Kuomintang forces in September, 1946. Kalgan fell, after a brief and fierce battle, early in October.

XL THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA

THE plains came to an end, and the russet-red mountains with their green shadows returned again. There were no rivers, almost no farmsteads, there were a few trees near the monasteries, but the whole earth seemed broken up with the white cracked fissures of rivers which have long ago been forgotten. It is one of the dominant impressions which remain of northern China—the rivers have gone, and they have left in their places only the salt-white tracks where they once rode. It was midsummer. They would flow again in autumn, but they would not flow as they did once before desiccation had affected those great buttressed plains.

It was wild, and it was sad. The chequered fields, with their millet, their winter wheat and corn and vegetables—there was no sign of them. Perhaps there were farmsteads huddled at the foot of the mountains in the shadows, but you could not see them, though we were flying low, perhaps not more than 5,000 feet. China is a hard-bitten land. She never looked so hard-bitten as when we flew south-east from the beginning of the Ordos plain.

And then suddenly—it was the last thing you expected, for your eyes were so accustomed to the yellow mountains and the cracked earth that you forgot there were other mountains—you come to the foot-hills and see before you, covered in cloud, the great blue hills that guard Pekin. They are sharp-peaked, wild, and they rise up like the serrated teeth of some mythological animal to guard the Pekin plain. In this light they were cobalt blue, and sometimes resembled waves, though here and there green pines covered the lower reaches of the mountains. The white and broken waterways were no longer visible. The faint greenness was pleasing. You saw no roads. Flying

low over the mountains, it seemed that there were mountains for ever, no end to them, and some were white-capped, not with snow, but with some glancing light from the sun. And there in the distance, like a mysterious thin white thread colouring the peaks of the mountains was the Great Wall. I had not seen it before. I must have dozed or slept when we were crossing it before, or perhaps there were mists. But now, as it grew larger and more definite—the thin cotton thread taking on the texture of a thin fine-spun rope—you noticed how closely it kept to the highest peaks, and how often there were precipitous slopes to the north of it. From the air it looked perfect. They could not have chosen better. The small white square guard-houses were perfectly spaced. You could make out the inner and outer walls, and you could follow the line of the wall to the horizon, so that even when the mountains disappeared in haze, you thought you could see the thin stretch of white walled road going beyond. But from the air the wall gave no impression of power. On the contrary it looked fragile, delicate as lace, powerless to stem invaders, a deliberate and artificial colouring of the peaks, as artificial indeed as the marble bridges in Pekin.

They say the wall is crumbling, and perhaps in five hundred years' time the bricks will all have been washed away by the rains and shrivelled by the frosts. It may be true. But like the tumuli and the cities whose outlines can still be seen from the air though wheat-fields ride over them, the walls will remain; and probably as long as men live on the planet there will be seen this thin delicate white lace which was once powerful enough to resist all invaders. They will not be walls any longer, but the whiteness of the bricks will have left its trace on the blue mountains, and men will remember, uncomfortably and vaguely, that battles were fought there.

There are only a few more mountains till you come to the plain. The plain shone like beaten bronze that afternoon all the way up to the gates of Pekin. The bronze was chequered and patterned, but dead level; there were farmsteads, clusters of dark-roofed villages, there were roads and railway lines. We flew low over the West Field, over the pagodas and temples which cluster the western hills, over the curving lake of the Summer Palace dominated by yellow-roofed temples squatting in grottoes and hills, but the lake was empty and the marble bridge looked like one of those miniature Japanese toys and the palaces were dying for lack of gold paint. Then, perhaps because there were so many aeroplanes in the air, the pilot decided to fly low over Pekin.

It was all over. Yenan, Kalgan, Chi-ning, the vast experiments, Mao Tse-tung leaning forward heavily, Chu Teh's red face in the light of the oil-lamp, the soldiers riding up the valley in clouds of dust with the Persian patterns on their saddle-bows, the loess caves and the pagodas and the ten thousand buddhas and the intensity and seriousness of these people—these you could remember, as you remember legends, but like all legends they belonged to the past. Once there was the legend of the Long March. Later there was the legend of the Border Areas, when farmers and soldiers fought off the Japanese for eight barren years. New Legends would come—men prayed and hoped so much for a coalition government that when this happens it will become as legendary as the rest, and still later there will be the legend which will come when the Chinese have understood themselves and how to behave among all the conflicting values of the modern world. But to possess legends at all, a country must be active, its people physically strong, its aim defined as sharply as the contours of the Great Wall. What was astonishing in

Yenan and Kalgan—I felt the same thing in Barcelona during the civil war—was that you believed you were living in a legendary present, and when the present becomes legendary, it is worth living in. It is worth living in Pekin, for there the legends of the past are insistent and without the slightest difficulty you can believe yourself a part of the old Ming conquerors, and slide easily into a life where legend is dominant; but this was a new legend—this legend which was being hammered out in caves, in industrial cities, on battlefields by these men who call themselves Communists and hope perhaps to realise Communism in ten thousand years.

As the aeroplane flew low over Pekin, throwing its shadow on the vast square golden-tiled roofs of the palaces, on the budding lotuses in the ponds and into the depths of the green lake, you realised that it was part of the same splendour—the imperial city reflected the colour of the people in tiles and stone. The people were changing, but they were still the same. Somewhere in the north of China an upheaval was taking place, comparable with the upheavals at the end of the Han and Sung Dynasties, and no one could foretell its end, except that one could say that China was at last coming into its own, conscious of herself, and superbly contemptuous of her past. The experiment was being made. For the first time in known history the peasants, the farmers and the soldiers were learning to read and to think, and to exert power. The feudal age was passing before your eyes. For a few more years the tide could be stemmed, but sooner than most of us believe she will grow into maturity. There was inexperience in Red China, they had made many blunders, they were hardly at all aware of the existence of an outside world because they had been hemmed in for so long and possessed at times an ingrown character, so that they

seemed content to be withdrawn into themselves, but they were educating the peasants and they were on the side of the people. The Kuomintang would remain, shorn of its unnecessary cruelties, but between them it was in their power to make a China worth living in—a China where the dying soldiers did not rot on the wayside, and no one needed to starve any more, and there were no requisitions by bandit armies, and no corruption. It was not a dream. It had been done. And because it had been done in one part of China, it could be done in other parts. And as the aeroplane circled over Pekin in the gold sunlight, and the hammered yellow of the imperial roofs shone so splendidly, there seemed no reason why its splendours should not be shared by all China. For this was at least certain—China was coming into her own.

XLI RETURN TO PEKIN

THESE are a traveller's notes; I know little of economics or sociology. I was not interested in statistics—Chinese statistics are notoriously inadequate, whether they come from the Communists or the Kuomintang. I would not have believed them if I had seen them, and I didn't hunt for them. So there is nothing here about the numbers of banknotes they have printed, the numbers of schools, the number of hospitals and training centres and midwives and factories, but someone else must write about them and tabulate them and take whatever deductions they can from them. I am interested in people and their behaviour and the stories they told, whether they were telling the truth or lying, how well they fed, what enjoy-

ment they took in life and what hopes they had in the future. And to me they seemed good people, conscious of their responsibilities, who did not tell lies and fed reasonably well because the food was reasonably well distributed, who possessed amazing hope in the future and took their enjoyment from it. They asked help from no one. They were prepared to stand on their own feet, and they were proud of it. In a very definite sense they seemed the forerunners of the future.

I stayed for a few more days in Pekin. It had never been hotter, yet it was a brilliant heat and though your clothes melted on you you could walk for miles through the palaces and on the shores of lakes. The painters were regilding the roofs, men wore the softest silks and fanned themselves continually. There were days when the summer palace outside the walls shone in the heat haze with the gold roofs glowing, and the palace itself seemed to have risen from the ground, supported only on rolling mists which came over the millet fields. There were cool gardens and temples in the Western Hills, where goldfish swam among reeds, and all round you were white pines, acacias and plum-trees. The hunting park had not changed—it had been a wilderness so long that no one had known it anything else. But all this was the China of the past. It was beautiful, as Chinese poetry is beautiful, but it had no relevance to the present or the future. Pekin was infinitely more a backwater than Yenan, and though it was splendid, it was slowly dying. The future was where? It was not in the corrupt merchants and officials; it was rarely to be found in places of power; you could not find it among the survivors of the Manchu Dynasty; you saw it, when you saw it at all, among students, among mechanics, among scientists and farmers and some administrators. The new China was coming. Sooner than most people suspected,

perhaps in two years, perhaps in three, there would be order again in the country. There would be tractors, village organisations everywhere, health inspectors, vast and far-reaching social reforms, the end and final defeat of militarists and corruptors.

The old order was dying hard in Pekin. Prices were still sky-rocketing. Supplies sent from America were still rotting on the wharves of Shanghai. The black market was organised on a scale which would be startling even in European countries. Professors still starved. The schools were still taken over by the soldiers, and there was never enough money to pay for the most important of all things —the education of the young. The country was bankrupt, and the jails were filled. And yet somehow, with that vast inertia which came from centuries of hardship and oppression, the country staggered on.

There occurred in July an event which had no very great significance for the world, yet it affected deeply hundreds and thousands of Chinese. A middle-aged professor, walking along a street in Kunming, was attacked by four gunmen who killed him instantaneously. The professor's son, a boy of eighteen, ran forward and shouted: "Let me die for you, Father," and was shot down. There had been another assassination four days before, and six months previously three students had been killed by hand-grenades in the University where the professor was working. What was remarkable was that this professor, Wen Yi-tuo, who had learned painting in America and given a new direction to studies in ancient Chinese, was the most beloved of all the professors in the Universities and the most determined upon democracy, a great poet and a profound scholar. There were evil geniuses abroad, who were deliberately attempting to kill whatever was best and finest in China. There were men who spat when you mentioned

"democracy". Yet it would have to come. In spite of assassinations it would come. In spite of everything it would come, because the whole current of the world was tending in the direction of representative government. The best men in the Kuomintang and the Communists knew this; and slowly but surely the liberation of the Chinese people would come. And soon enough China would no longer be a pawn in any international game, but herself at last. It meant little or nothing that Kalgan and Chining were to be captured later from the Communists—the opposing forces were too equal, the advantages of the Kuomintang no greater than those of their opponents. The battle might go on for a little while longer, but the social revolution would still sweep over China, as it is sweeping over all the countries of the Far East. Misplaced American aid to the Kuomintang might affect the issue for a few weeks or months, but in the long run victory is still reserved for the Chinese people, whose savage sufferings since 1911 must never be forgotten. The faint-hearted, the corrupt and those who do not rely upon themselves will lose; those will win who have their deepest roots among the people.

THE END